NATION

Delhi schools go hybrid as pollution curbs tighten

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BUSINESS

Fruit, veggie supply per capita up by 7-12 kg in last decade

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SPORTS

BGT: Rain halts play, Aus ends day at 28/0

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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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Cong addicted to changing Constitution: PM in LS

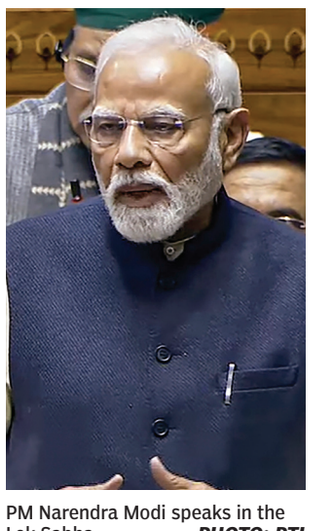
In 110 minute speech, Modi again attacked Nehru

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has accused the Congress party of repeatedly undermining the Constitution, claiming they have "tasted blood" through their actions. In his 100-minutes speech on day 2 of debate marking the 75th anniversary of the Constitution's adoption, Modi asserted that his government's policies since 2014 have been aimed at strengthening India's unity in line with constitutional values.

Targeting the Nehru-Gandhi family, he said, "Congress got addicted to this habit of changing the Constitution, and they repeated this again and again."

He cited instances from the tenures of Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, and Rajiv Gandhi, alleging that they had waged war on democratic principles and freedom of expression. Modi remarked that Indira Gandhi's imposition of the Emergency and subsequent constitutional amendments represented an affront to democracy.



PM Narendra Modi speaks in the Lok Sabha **PHOTO: PTI**

He claimed that recent actions from leaders like Rahul Gandhi reflect a continuation of these detrimental practices. Modi noted that during the UPA government, the National Advisory Council was placed "above" the Cabinet, and he accused the Congress of pushing for religious reservations to appease voters.

Modi praised his government for repealing Article 370 and i Goods and Services Tax.

—PTI

MODI SAYS NO TO RELIGION-BASED QUOTA

New Delhi, 14 Dec

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday proposed 11 resolutions which include upholding existing reservations for marginalised sections but strongly opposing any religion-based quota. But Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav termed the 11 resolutions "hollow and fake promises."

THE RESOLUTIONS ARE

- Everyone must perform their duties
- Calls for inclusive development across all regions and communities
- Pledge to zero corruption tolerance
- Instill pride in the country's laws and regulations among citizens
- Breaking free from colonial mindset
- Constitution should not be misused for political gains
- Reservations granted to marginalised communities would not be taken away
- Envision India as a global example in women-led development
- Mantra of national development through regional growth
- Vision of 'Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat'
- End dynastic politics

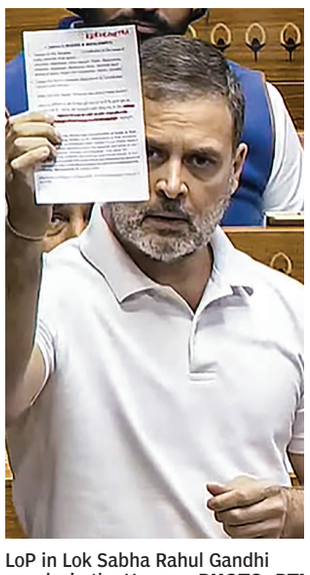
Constitution unIndian for Savarkar: Rahul

He says INDIA will relocate Hathras victim's kin

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi announced on Saturday that the INDIA bloc will facilitate the relocation of the family of the Hathras gang rape victim if the government fails to do so. His remarks came during a debate on the 75th anniversary of the Constitution, where he also launched a scathing attack on the BJP and its Hindutva ideologue, VD Savarkar.

Gandhi cited Savarkar's criticism of the Constitution, claiming he expressed that "there is nothing Indian about it" and preferred the Manusmriti. He accused the ruling party of "defaming and ridiculing" its own "supreme leader" while purporting to protect the Constitution. Drawing parallels with the epic tale of Eklavya, Gandhi asserted that the government's policies are metaphorically "chopping off" the thumbs of farmers and the poor, symbolising their livelihoods and skills.



LoP in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi speaks in the House **PHOTO: PTI**

In response, BJP leaders, including Shiv Sena MP Shrikant Shinde, reminded Gandhi that his grandmother, former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, praised Savarkar as a "remarkable son of India". They questioned whether her views implied support for anti-Constitutional sentiments.

BJP member Nishikant Dubey rebutted Gandhi's remarks, asserting that the late Indira Gandhi issued a postage stamp in Savarkar's honour and noted her donation to the Savarkar Trust. Former law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad suggested Gandhi visit the Cellular Jail in the Andaman Islands to understand Savarkar's sacrifices for the nation.

As the debate continued, Gandhi reiterated the commitment of the INDIA bloc to uphold the Constitution amidst ongoing attacks from the BJP and RSS. *—PTI*

AKHILESH DARES BJP TO DISSOLVE GOVT, HOLD ONOE POLLS

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav has sharply criticised the Indian government's 'One Nation One Election' initiative, suggesting the ruling government should dissolve and hold fresh elections. Speaking to reporters, Yadav stated, "If they are in such a hurry to implement this, now would be the best time to dissolve the government while debating the Constitution."

The Union Law and Justice Minister, Arjun Ram Meghwal, is set to introduce 'The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill, 2024' in the Lok Sabha on 16 December. This bill seeks to facilitate simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, supported by the BJP-led NDA alliance but met with staunch opposition from the INDIA bloc.

'Muslims treated as 2nd grade citizens'

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav has accused the Indian government of systematically diminishing the rights of minorities, particularly Muslims, during a Lok Sabha debate.

He claimed that over 20 crore people are being reduced to "second-grade" citizens and faced increasing atrocities. Yadav called for a caste census to address social inequalities and denounced the government's handling of border issues, electoral manipulation, and the perceived erosion of democratic principles. *—ANI*

South Korea impeaches President

SEOUL, 14 DEC

South Korea's Parliament voted Saturday to impeach President Yoon Suk Yeol as authorities investigate allegations of rebellion over his controversial 3 December martial law decree that has caused huge political turmoil in the country. The National Assembly passed the motion 204-85 in a floor vote. Yoon's presidential powers and duties will be suspended.*—PTI*

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Indian OpenAI whistleblower found dead in US

NEW YORK, 14 DEC

A 26-year-old Indian-origin former employee of the artificial intelligence giant OpenAI has died by suicide in San Francisco, authorities said. Suchir Balaji was found dead inside his Buchanan Street apartment in San Francisco on 26 November on Thanksgiving Day. Balaji was known for whistleblowing the blockbuster artificial intelligence company. *—PTI*

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2 migrants from Bihar shot dead in Manipur

IMPHAL, 14 DEC

Two teenage migrant workers from Bihar were shot dead in Manipur's Kakching on Saturday evening, police said. The incident happened near the panchayat office in Keirak on Kakching-Wabagai Road around 5.20 pm, they said. The deceased are Sunalal Kumar, 18, and Dasharat Kumar, 17, of Rajwahi village in Yadavpur police station area of Bihar's Gopalganj. *—PTI*

17 farmers hurt as they face tear gas, water canons again

SHAMBHU, 14 DEC

Protesting farmers suspended their foot march to Delhi after some of them were injured on Saturday in teargas shelling and use of water cannons by Haryana security personnel, who foiled the agitators' third attempt in less than 10 days to cross the Punjab-Haryana border.

Farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher claimed that 17 farmers were injured.

"How are 101 farmers a danger to the law and order and peace of the country? You are debating the Constitution (in Parliament). Which Constitution allows the use of force against farmers," he asked.

No discussion is taking place on the issue of farmers in Parliament, Pandher said.

On the next course of action, he said a tractor march will be taken out in states except Punjab on 16 December. A 'rail roko' protest will be held on 18 December from noon to 3pm in Punjab, he added.

The farmers under the banner of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha are pressing for various demands, including a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP). They have also demanded that the Centre initiate talks with them to address their issues.

It was the third attempt by protesting farmers to march towards the national capital. Farmers had earlier made two attempts to cross the Shambhu border point on December 6 and December 8 but they were not allowed to proceed by security personnel in Haryana.

Ahead of the resumption of their march, the Haryana government had on Saturday suspended mobile internet and bulk SMS services in 12 villages in Ambala till 17 December. *—PTI*

Security use water cannons to disperse farmers agitating at Shambhu border, in Patiala, Punjab, on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

BJP gave ₹150 cr bribe to official for Waqf: CM

BENGALURU, 14 DEC

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday alleged that BJP State President BY Vijayendra "tried to bribe" the former Minority Commission Chairperson during the previous BJP government, Anwar Manippady with Rs 150 crore to suppress investigations into the Waqf property encroachment.

He even claimed that Manippady had written to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi about this corruption.

Manippady stated that Vijayendra visited his house during BS Yediyurappa's tenure as chief minister and offered Rs150 crore to keep silent about the Waqf property encroachment report. Manippady however rejected the offer and reported the incident to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP President JP Nadda.

—Salar News

>>>More on Page 2

AFTER TECHIE'S SUICIDE

City cop kills self; blames wife, in-laws

BENGALURU, 14 DEC

A 33-year-old police head constable died by suicide in Bengaluru on Friday night, allegedly jumping in front of a train in Byappanahalli, police said on Saturday.

The incident occurred after Tippanna Alugur, who was posted at as the head constable in Hulimavu police station, returned home after completing his shift. A "heated argument" broke out between him and his wife, which is believed to have led him to take the extreme step, they said.

Tippanna left a one-page death note in Kannada, alleging torture and harassment by his wife and father-in-law, police said.

In the purported note, he claimed that on 12 December, his father-in-law had threatened him at 7.26 pm, telling him to either die or be killed so that his daughter could live in peace. The note also mentioned incidents of verbal abuse and threats to his life.

According to police, Tippanna, who married in 2021, did not have any children. On the day of the incident, he had worked his 8 am to 2 pm shift before returning home.

PHOTO: X

Police said that following the "dispute" with his wife, he left the house and went to the Huskur railway gate around 11.30pm on Friday and ended his life. A case has been filed under different sections of the BNS, including abetment of suicide and criminal intimidation against Tippanna's wife and father-in-law. This alleged suicide comes close on the heels of the case of a techie who ended his life in Bengaluru recently, citing harassment by his estranged wife and her family.

—Salar News

AMID MOSQUE ROW

Sambhal reopens temple closed since 1978

SAMBHAL, 14 DEC

The Sambhal administration has reopened the Bhasma Shankar temple, which had remained locked since 1978 due to communal riots that displaced the local Hindu community. The temple, located near the Shahi Jama Masjid, was rediscovered during an anti-encroachment drive aimed at tackling illegal constructions and electricity theft.

Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Vandana Mishra, overseeing efforts against power theft in the area, reported that the temple came to their attention during inspections. "Upon noticing it, I immediately informed the district authorities. We all came here together and decided to reopen the temple," said Mishra, noting that local residents confirmed it had been shuttered for decades.

The temple, which houses an idol of Lord Hanuman and a Shivling, holds significant cultural value for the local community. Many residents recalled its importance as a place of worship and expressed joy at its reopening. Mukesh Rastogi, a local, mentioned that he had heard stories about the temple from his ancestors, believing it to be at least 500 years old.

Vishnu Shankar Rastogi, an 82-year-old member of the Nagar Hindu Mahasabha, shared his personal connection to the temple, stating, "This temple, dedicated to our Kulguru, has been locked since the riots." He recounted how around 25-30 Hindu families had fled the area after the violence in 1978.

The reopening comes in the wake of heightened tensions following recent violence linked to a court-ordered survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid, which resulted in four deaths and several injuries. *—PTI*

Security personnel inside a temple that was reopened after 46 years, at Khaggu Sarai area in Sambhal district **PHOTO: PTI**

LITERARY MAGIC UNFOLDS

Children read books at the 13th edition of the Bangalore Literature Festival in Bengaluru on Saturday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Sugarcane body to siege Suvarna Soudha on 16 Dec

MYSURU, 14 DEC

Members of the Karnataka State Sugarcane Growers Association will stage a picket at Suvarna Soudha in Belagavi on 16, December demanding the state government address their various issues. At a press conference in Mysuru on Saturday, Association President Hallikerehundi Bhagyaraj announced that the decision was made during a meeting. The association is urging the government to set the minimum support price for sugarcane at Rs 5500 per tonne for the next crushing season and release arrears of Rs 950, along with addressing other demands. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

Fire at Kalaburgi cafe, no injuries reported

KALABURAGI, 14 DEC

A minor fire broke out at a cafe within the Kalaburagi city limits on Saturday, fire officials said.

The fire occurred at around 10.30 am, after which a fire tender was rushed to the spot. "The fire broke out at a cafe here. It was a minor incident and was extinguished by 2.30 pm. No injuries or loss of life were reported," a senior fire official stated. However, the cause of the fire is still being determined, he added. *—PTI*

Driver escapes with ₹50L in Koramangala

BENGALURU 14 DEC

A driver employed by a real estate businessman has gone missing after allegedly stealing Rs 50 lakh in cash, in a brazen theft reported in Koramangala on Friday afternoon, the police said. The accused, identified as Rakshit Kumar, had been working as a driver for Subbareddy, a real estate businessman, for the past eight months. According to the police, Subbareddy had collected Rs 50 lakh from his associates to invest in a business deal. He placed the cash-filled bag in his car and returned home for lunch, leaving the vehicle parked outside. Seizing the opportunity, Rakshit reportedly took the bag containing the cash, handed over the car keys to the security guard stationed at Subbareddy's house, and fled the scene. When Subbareddy returned to his car after his meal, the security guard informed him that the driver was missing. "We have identified crucial leads regarding Rakshit's whereabouts, and his arrest is imminent," a senior police officer told Salar News on Saturday. Further investigation is underway. *—Salar News*

Marxism is based on science: AIDSO Chief

MYSURU, 14 DEC

All India Democratic Student Organization (AIDSO) State unit President KS Ashwini on Saturday said that Marxism is based on objectivity, and scientific and systematically fights against injustices in the society. Speaking at the two-day study camp at Nrupathunga Kannada School at Ramakrishna nagar, she said this political philosophy followers not only fight against social evils, all forms of injustices, social discrimination in the society. They are also against anti-people policies of the government like the commercialisation of education, atrocities against women and children, unemployment and poverty. She said that Marxism, a scientifically truth-seeking philosophy, is a science of all sciences based on dialectical materialism." She said that injustices in human society continued from primitive communism to slavery to feudalism to capitalism, in which we are currently living. *—Salar News*

BJP head offered ₹150cr bribe over Waqf: CM

CM says ex-minority panel head wrote to PM

BENGALURU, 14 DEC

Siddaramaiah alleged that BJP, under Yediyurappa and Bommai, was notorious for issuing record notices related to Waqf properties **PHOTO: PTI**

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday alleged that BJP State President BY Vijayendra "tried to bribe" the former Minority Commission Chairperson during the previous BJP government, Anwar Manippady with Rs 150 crore to suppress investigations into the Waqf property encroachment.

He even claimed that Manippady had written to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi about this corruption.

Manippady stated that Vijayendra visited his house during BS Yediyurappa's tenure as chief minister and offered Rs150 crore to keep silent about the Waqf property encroachment report. Manippady however rejected the offer and reported the incident to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP President JP Nadda.

BJP has yet to respond to the allegations, which come at a time of heightened political tensions in Karnataka. The allegations have reignited debates about governance and accountability in the state, with calls for an impartial investigation gaining momentum. Salar News

"What happened to Modi's grand 'Na khaunga, na khane doonga' promise? His silence on this explosive allegation raises suspicions and several questions. Why is the BJP leadership shielding Vijayendra and others involved in the Waqf property loot?" the Chief Minister asked.

He alleged that the BJP, under Yediyurappa and Basavaraj Bommai, was already notorious for issuing record notices related to Waqf properties.

He also alleged that the Vijayapura BJP MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal had accused Vijayendra of paying Rs 2,000 crore to secure his father Yediyurappa's Chief Ministership.

"From Covid procurement scam to Waqf property looting, skeletons are tumbling out of the BJP's closet in Karnataka. Instead of answering these allegations, BJP is resorting to baseless accusations against our leaders to divert attention," Siddaramaiah said.

He said Modi should break his silence and order a CBI inquiry into these allegations immediately as "the people of Karnataka deserve answers, not cover-ups".

This statement comes against the backdrop of BJP MLAs staging a walkout from the Assembly on Friday as ruling Congress members allegedly tried to obstruct Leader of Opposition R Ashoka from raising the Waqf issue. *—PTI*

Techie suicide: Wife seeks anticipatory bail

PRAYAGRAJ, 14 DEC

Engineer Atul Subhash's estranged wife and her family members, who he had accused of harassment in his suicide note, have filed anticipatory bail pleas in Allahabad High Court.

The anticipatory bail applications have been filed by Subhash's wife Nikita Singhania, her mother Nisha Singhania, brother Anurag Singhania, and uncle Sushil Singhania. Subhash, a 34-year-old engineer, died by suicide in Bengaluru on Monday, allegedly due to harassment by his estranged wife and her family members. A case of abetment to suicide has been filed against Nikita Singhania and her relatives.

In her complaint, Nikita mentioned that she married Subhash on 26 April, 2019 and that her husband and in-laws were unhappy with the wedding gifts from her parents. They demanded an additional Rs10 lakh. "They started torturing me physically and mentally for dowry. When I told my parents about the harassment and dowry, my parents explained to me that everything will be fine, listen and keep living with it. But no improvement of any kind came," she had said. *—PTI*

Pramoda Wadiyar launches Sayoga Bazar in Mysuru

MYSURU, 14 DEC

Mysuru Royal Family matriarch, Pramoda Devi Wadiyar, inaugurated the two-day Sayoga Bazaar on Saturday, an annual event celebrating exquisite handcrafted products and supporting artisans from diverse regions. Held at VV Mohalla in Mysuru, the event highlights artisans as entrepreneurs, showcasing their craftsmanship and creativity.

The bazaar features a wide range of products, including natural perfumes, fabric dolls, stationery, home decor, macrame items, clothing, jewellery, coffee and gourmet bakery products.

She emphasised that Bazaar is a celebration of authenticity, craftsmanship, and community. *—Salar News*

Man jumps to death from 16th floor apartment in Yelahanka

BENGALURU, 14 DEC

PHOTO: PTI

- According to early reports, the incident occurred in the early hours, prompting shocked residents to alert the authorities

A 40-year-old man reportedly took his own life by jumping from the 16th floor of the RMZ Galleria apartment complex in Yelahanka on Saturday morning. The local police have initiated an investigation to ascertain the circumstances surrounding this tragic event.

The deceased, identified as Ravi Kumar, was a resident of the complex. According to early reports, the incident occurred in the early hours, prompting shocked residents to alert the authorities.

Emergency services and police quickly arrived at the scene and secured the area for further investigation.

While the precise reason behind Ravi Kumar's alleged suicide remains unknown, police are exploring various angles, including potential personal and professional challenges that may have led to his decision. "We are speaking to the deceased's family, friends, and neighbours to understand if there were any issues," a police official informed **Salar News**, declining to provide additional details related to the incident. (Suicide is not the solution. Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.) *—Salar News*

HEALTH FOR ALL

Volunteers participate in the 18th Bengaluru Walkathon, 'Health For All,' organised by Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled in partnership with OpenText at Kittur Rani Chennamma Ground, Jayanagar, on Saturday. It aims to promote inclusivity, raise awareness about disabilities, and advocate for better healthcare access ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

'Panchamasali seer took supari from BJP to target CM'

MYSURU, 14 DEC

Karnataka State Backward Classes Awareness Forum President Shivaramu said that the remarks were to destabilise Congress government **PHOTO: SALAR**

Karnataka State Backward Classes Awareness Forum President, KS Shivaramu, on Saturday alleged that Kudalasangama Lingayat Panchamasali Gurupeeth pontiff, Basava Mrityunjaya Swamiji, who has been leading the Panchamasali Lingayat agitation for 2A reservation, has accepted a "supari" (contract) from the BJP to tarnish Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's reputation.

Speaking at a round-table conference at the Jaladarshini Guest House, Shivaramu criticised Basava Mrityunjaya Swamiji for his recent statements against Siddaramaiah, calling them a deliberate attempt to destabilize the state government. He noted that the pontiff, who previously maintained cordial relations with Siddaramaiah, has now aligned himself with the BJP to push the Panchamasali agenda and "spread venom" against the Chief Minister.

Shivaramu accused the BJP of attempting to malign Siddaramaiah's image through false allegations, including scandals involving MUDA and the Valmiki Development Corporation, but claimed these efforts failed. He expressed concern that the pontiff's actions are creating divisions among communities, particularly between AHINDA (minorities, backward classes, and Dalits) and upper-caste Lingayats, which could disturb communal harmony.

- Leader Shivanna, criticised the demand for 2A reservation for the Panchamasali community, arguing that it is already politically, socially well-off

He further condemned the pontiff's agitation, labeling it undemocratic and unconstitutional since the matter of 2A reservation is currently under Supreme Court review. Shivaramu also warned that his forum, along with AHINDA classes, would launch a statewide protest if the seer continued advocating for the inclusion of forward Panchamasali Lingayats in the 2A category, which is reserved for economically and socially disadvantaged groups.

M Shivanna, criticised the demand for 2A reservation for the Panchamasali community, arguing that it is already politically, socially, and economically well-off. He stressed that the inclusion of Panchamasalis would jeopardize the benefits currently enjoyed by 199 other backward communities under the 2A category. The conference concluded with a resolution urging the state government to release the findings of the caste census. OBC leaders, including M. Shivanna, Yogesh Uppar, Khaleem, participated in the event. *—Salar News*

Police considers reintroducing vehicle towing to ease traffic

BENGALURU, 14 DEC

City Police Commissioner B Dayananda also urged citizens to report road issues via the BBMP app for quicker resolution **PHOTO: SALAR**

City Police Commissioner B Dayananda announced that authorities are considering reinstating the vehicle towing system to tackle traffic congestion. Speaking at the Masika Sanchara Samparka Divasa in Kengeri, Dayananda highlighted that improper parking is a major traffic cause and emphasised that towing could help ensure smoother traffic flow.

"We are discussing the reintroduction of the towing system to ensure smooth traffic flow and to discourage random parking," he said, adding that if the earlier issues with the towing system are resolved, its implementation would be more effective.

The towing policy was suspended in February 2022 after public backlash over harassment by towing staff. Additionally, Joint Commissioner MN Anucheth suggested that loading and unloading activities should be restricted to nighttime hours. He stated this would help alleviate morning traffic congestion and improve overall road conditions during peak hours.

In response to a Nagarabhavi resident's grievances about traffic congestion and pothole-ridden roads Dayananda also urged citizens to report road issues via the BBMP app for quicker resolution.

"Senior officials take these complaints seriously, and necessary action will be initiated promptly," he assured. *—Salar News*

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

SWIFT City to come up in Sarjapur: Patil

BENGALURU, 14 DEC

Minister MB Patil added that the government plans to develop five Mini KWIN Cities, including ones in Vijayapura and Hubballi-Dharwad **PHOTO: PTI**

Minister of Large and Medium Scale Industries MB Patil announced on Saturday that he will advance the initiative to develop 'SWIFT City' in Sarjapur here.

A press statement from Patil's office revealed that SWIFT City would become Karnataka's third major planned industrial hub after Electronic City and ITPL.

According to him, the project would focus on startups, workspaces, innovation, finance, and technology.

"Despite the presence of thousands of companies in Bengaluru, many stakeholders have expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of well-planned workspaces. To address this, we will provide 150-ft-wide connecting roads in Sarjapura and ensure world-class facilities, including residential clusters and schools," he said.

He said that over 1,000 acres of land in the Sarjapura Industrial Area have been reserved for the project.

Sarjapura has been identified for its strategic location near National Highways 44 and 48, as well as its proximity to Bengaluru's thriving IT hub, Patil said.

The Minister further highlighted that small and medium-sized startups would benefit from spaces ranging from 5,000 to 20,000 sq ft, available through lease, sale, or investment-sharing models. He also outlined plans to transform Karnataka into a 'Silicon State'. "While Bengaluru is already recognised as the Silicon City, the objective is to extend this recognition across the entire state," Patil stated.

He added that the government plans to develop five Mini KWIN Cities, including ones in Vijayapura and Hubballi-Dharwad, in collaboration with the IT/BT department, furthering Karnataka's 'Silicon State' vision. *—PTI*

Activists allege BJP & JD(S) also involved in MUDA scam

MYSURU, 14 DEC

Activists Snehamayi Krishna and PS Nataraj, who are actively exposing the MUDA scam, alleged on Saturday that leaders from the JD(S) and BJP are also involved and vowed to fight against them.

Speaking at a press conference, the activists clarified that their efforts are not limited to targeting Congress leaders but also extend to JD(S) and BJP leaders who have allegedly acquired alternative sites under the controversial 50:50 MUDA scheme.

Snehamayi Krishna accused former MCC corporator and BJP leader MC Ramesh of illegally obtaining two 60x90 sites by falsely claiming to have lost 1.1 acres of land to MUDA under the scheme in Basavanahalli (Survey No. 121). He noted that the Income Tax Department is already investigating MC Ramesh, and the case is likely to be handed over to the CBI soon.

Advocate Ravikumar, who is also fighting against MUDA irregularities, alleged that MC Ramesh secured the sites using a fabricated record and by submitting the General Power of Attorney (GPA) of the landowner, which violates MUDA norms. As per the rules, MUDA can allocate sites only to landowners, not GPA holders. Ravikumar further claimed that MUDA allotted these sites, located in the upscale Vijayanagar area, to MC Ramesh for just Rs 3,000. The current market value in this locality stands at Rs10,000 per square foot. He highlighted that MUDA granted these alternative sites two years ago, nearly 30 years after acquiring the Basavanahalli land in 1994, solely based on the GPA. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

BJP veteran Advani admitted in ICU, condition stable

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Veteran BJP leader Lal Krishna Advani has been admitted in the ICU of Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals here. "LK Advani ji, former deputy prime minister of India, has been admitted to the ICU of Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals for medical management and investigations," the hospital said in a statement. "He is under the care of Dr Vinit Suri and is currently stable," it added. The hospital, however, did not disclose any information on the reason for his hospitalisation. A source said the 96-year-old was brought to the hospital about two days ago. —*PTI*

Police: Man who booed Kerala CM mentally ill

T'PURAM, 14 DEC

A 28-year-old advocate who a day ago had booed at Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, outside the venue of the 29th edition of the International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK 2024) here, was suffering from mental illness, police said on Saturday. An officer of Museum police station said that the man, who was a practicing advocate, was undergoing psychiatric treatment for his mental illness and therefore, he was not arrested nor any case was registered against him. "We sent him home on Friday night itself with his mother and other family members who had arrived at the station," the officer said. The man had booed at Vijayan as the CM was proceeding towards the IFFK venue after alighting from his car, according to visuals on TV channels. —*PTI*

Sena (UBT) leader abducted, released; probe on

MUMBAI, 14 DEC

A Shiv Sena (UBT) leader from Nanded was allegedly kidnapped by eight to nine persons and then released some time later, prompting police to register an FIR and begin probe, an official said on Saturday. Nanded Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Gaurav Kotgire was abducted from Bafna area, some 670 kilometres from here, on Friday night, the official said. "He was bundled into an SUV when he was working in his garage and taken to an unidentified location. He was released a few hours later, after which he approached police. He has claimed the accused had covered their faces and threatened him with a weapon. The accused allegedly told him to not indulge much in politics and property deals as well as talk ill of other leaders," the official informed. —*PTI*

BJP slams CM Sukhu over 'Jungli Murga' remarks

SHIMLA, 14 DEC

Himachal BJP on Saturday demanded an apology from Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu for allegedly encouraging his associates to eat "Jungli Murga" (Grey Junglefowl), which is an endangered species, during a dinner in a remote area in Shimla. Meanwhile, Sukhu responded by saying that eating non-vegetarian food is a way of life in villages and accused the opposition leaders of making an issue out of it. BJP's statement came after a video went viral on the internet, in which Sukhu is seen saying, "Inko do Jungli Murga, hume thodi khana hai (Give them Jungli Murga, I don't want to eat)." Sukhu then asks his companions if they wish to eat the dish. "Jungli Murga (Grey Junglefowl) is an endangered species listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act 2022. Hunting and eating this species is illegal," said BJP spokesperson. —*PTI*

Cong denied Ambedkar his due: Rijiju

'Cong must apologise to lessen sins'

Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju speaks in the Lok Sabha during the Winter session of Parliament, in New Delhi, on Saturday PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Union minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday tore into the Congress for not giving BR Ambedkar his due, as he questioned the opposition's claims that minorities were being denied their rights.

Intervening in the debate in the Lok Sabha on 75 years of the adoption of the Constitution, the parliamentary affairs minister cautioned that "our words and actions should not diminish the image of the country in the world fora".

Rijiju was the first speaker on the second day of the debate in the Lower House.

While India has given equal voting rights to all, some claim that minorities have no rights in the country, Rijiju said in an apparent jibe at the opposition.

In his over an hour-long speech, Rijiju suggested that the Congress should "apologise" to Ambedkar to "lessen its sins".

He alleged that "you" (apparently the Congress) made Ambedkar lose in the 1952 parliamentary polls.

A day after several opposition leaders claimed in the Lower House that the rights of minorities were shrinking, the Union minister said India not only provided legal protection to minorities, it also had a provision for affirmative action to protect their interests.

Rijiju said successive governments worked for the welfare of minorities. "The Congress has also done that, I am not undermining its role." —PTI

DMK MP A Raja speaks in the Lok Sabha during the Winter session of Parliament, in New Delhi, on Saturday PHOTO: PTI

A Raja seeks RSS' role in Constitution

Raja's remarks stir uproar in LS

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

DMK leader A Raja hit out at BJP on Saturday, claiming that the ruling party would have changed the Constitution had the words "secular" and "socialist" not been added to the Preamble of the document during Emergency.

Participating in a debate on the Constitution in the Lok Sabha, Raja also dared BJP to spell out the contribution of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Hindu Mahasabha to the making of the Constitution.

"Democracy alone was assaulted during MISA, but in your regime, entire six elements (spelt out in the Kesavananda Bharati case), namely democracy, secularism, rule of law, equality, federalism, judicial impartiality, everything has gone," Raja said.

When Union minister Pralhad Joshi pointed out that DMK founder M Karunanidhi was also arrested during Emergency, Raja countered, saying his party does have grievances with the Congress, but is sitting with it to uphold the Constitution.

The senior DMK leader said the Congress was a "silent spectator" when he and his party colleague, K Kanimozhi, were put in jail in the 2G case.

Certain remarks made by Raja triggered an uproar in the House and were objected. —*PTI*

> **For a very long time, a big hypocritical drama has been conducted in this country, where those who are the attackers of the Constitution have posed themselves as champions of the Constitution**
>
> -Tejasvi Surya, BJP MP

Bill: Frequent polls disrupt normalcy

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

PHOTO: X

A proposed bill to implement the 'one nation, one election' initiative underscores the necessity of conducting simultaneous elections, highlighting the growing concerns over the escalating costs and lengthy durations associated with frequent polls.

The 'Constitution (129th) Amendment Bill, 2024', which is set for introduction in the Lok Sabha, argues that the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct across various election-bound regions hampers development programmes and disrupts everyday life. It further notes that these frequent elections affect the functioning of essential services and require a significant redeployment of manpower away from their primary responsibilities for extended election duties.

To facilitate simultaneous elections, the bill proposes the inclusion of a new Article 82A, detailing the elections for both Lok Sabha and all state legislative assemblies. It also seeks to amend existing articles concerning duration of parliamentary and state assemblies. —*PTI*

VP: Lack of dialogue weakens institutions

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Institutions and individuals will degenerate if there is no scrutiny, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar said on Saturday underscoring the importance of expression and dialogue for a democracy to thrive.

".. audit, self-audit is very important. The surest way to bring about degeneration of an individual or an institution, (is to) keep it or the gentleman or gentle lady from scrutiny. You are beyond scrutiny, your degeneration is assured. And therefore, self-audit, an audit beyond self, is essential," he said.

Dhankhar, who faces a no-trust notice from the opposition parties for allegedly being partisan in his role as chairman of Parliament's upper house Rajya Sabha, was speaking at the 50th Foundation Day programme of Indian Post & Telecommunication Accounts and Finance Service (IP&TAFS) here.

Dhankhar on Saturday said challenges to institutions often stem from the erosion of meaningful dialogue and authentic expression. —*PTI*

Kerala CM urges PM to withdraw Vizhinjam port VGF decision

T'PURAM, 14 DEC

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and PM Narendra Modi PHOTO: X

Following the Centre's refusal to reconsider its decision requiring Kerala to repay the Viability Gap Fund (VGF) for the Vizhinjam Seaport project, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requesting that the fund be allocated without a repayment condition.

In his open letter, the Chief Minister claimed that the Vizhinjam project would be unique in India, as it is the only instance where the Government of India has insisted on repayment of VGF assistance. The central government has approved Rs 817.80 crore in VGF for the project, but stipulated that it should be repaid by Kerala in Net Present Value (NPV) terms through premium revenue sharing.

Vijayan argued that if repayment is enforced, the funding would not be a capital grant but rather a loan, undermining the primary purpose of the VGF scheme, which is to support economically justified infrastructure projects lacking financial viability. He contended that the repayment could ultimately require the state to pay between Rs 10,000 and Rs 12,000 crore.

The Chief Minister noted that, unlike the Tuticorin Port project's VGF allocation, which had no repayment stipulation, the conditions imposed on Kerala contradict the established guidelines of the VGF scheme.

Vijayan urged the Centre to reconsider its stance, emphasising the substantial investments made by the state in the Vizhinjam project, which he described as vital for local and economic growth. —*PTI*

JUSTICE DENIED IN BENGAL

A day after two prime suspects in the RG Kar hospital doctor's rape and murder case were granted bail, the Left parties and Congress protested across Kolkata on Saturday, accusing the CBI of 'failing' to ensure justice in the high-profile case PHOTO: PTI

Kejri writes to Shah, slams 'crime capital' tag

Arvind Kejriwal PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday stepped up his attack on the BJP-led central government over the "deteriorating" law and order situation in Delhi and sought a meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah to discuss the issue.

In a letter to Shah, the former Delhi chief minister claimed that the city was being called the country's "crime capital" as he cited the recent bomb threats to schools as well as IGI airport.

The letter comes ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls scheduled to be held in February 2025.

"It's so shameful that under your watch, our grand capital due to failure of law and order is being called rape capital, gangster capital, drug capital," Kejriwal said.

Meanwhile, prestigious New Delhi Assembly seat is likely to witness a fierce electoral contest with sitting MLA and AAP supremo Kejriwal pitted against the sons of former Delhi chief ministers as BJP and Congress candidates.

Parvesh Verma, the son of former Delhi chief minister Sahib Singh Verma, on Saturday told PTI that he has been asked to prepare for contesting from Delhi.

Congress has already announced its candidate Sandeep Dikshit on the seat. He is son of three-time former Delhi chief minister Sheila Dikshit.

New Delhi constituency is one of the smallest, numerically speaking, of the total 70 assembly seats and is dominated by the government employees as voters. —*PTI*

Bihar PSC exam paper leaks 'state-sponsored': Tejashwi

PATNA, 14 DEC

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav has charged Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar with "maintaining silence" over alleged irregularities in a PSC examination, claiming that recent question paper "leaks" in such competitive tests were "state-sponsored".

In a video statement late on Friday, the leader of the opposition in the assembly also accused Kumar of "failing" to communicate with job aspirants who staged protests over the alleged paper leak in the 70th Integrated Combined Competitive Examination (CCE) 2024, conducted by the Bihar Public Service Commission.

Kumar's "reluctance to communicate with students who were baton-charged by the police and slapped by an official of the Patna district" showed that the JD(U) supremo is a "tired man and unable to govern Bihar", Tejashwi claimed. —*PTI*

CONDOLENCES POUR IN

Senior Cong leader EVKS Elangovan passes away

CHENNAI, 14 DEC

Senior Congress leader and former Union Minister EVKS Elangovan has passed away at the age of 75 after battling age-related health issues at a private hospital in Chennai. Admitted on 11 November, the hospital confirmed that he died on Saturday despite the best efforts of the medical staff.

Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) president K Selvaperunthagai mourned Elangovan's passing, calling it a "huge loss" to his family and the party. Chief Minister MK Stalin also expressed his condolences, noting Elangovan's deep sorrow following the recent death of his son, E Thirumahan Everaa, and his resilience in serving the people despite his personal grief.

Born on 21 December, 1948, in Gobichettipalayam, Elangovan held various ministerial positions within the Union Government and was instrumental in significant policy changes, such as the abolition of CENVAT. He was a tireless advocate for the Congress party in Tamil Nadu, known for his outspoken views.

As a tribute, the party flag will be flown at half-mast at Congress offices across Tamil Nadu. His body will be available for public homage at his residence in Manapakkam before cremation at the electric crematorium in Mugalivakkam on Sunday at 4PM.

Local Congress members in Erode have already begun paying their respects, displaying a portrait of Elangovan outside his home. —*PTI*

CONG MUST EARN ITS PLACE AS INDIA BLOC LEADER: OMAR

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Acknowledging growing discontent among INDIA bloc partners with Congress, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has asked the party to justify its leadership role in the alliance instead of taking it for granted.

Abdullah, while recognising the Congress' significant position as a pan-India party and the largest opposition in Parliament, emphasised that leadership "has to be earned" and cannot be taken for granted. He also suggested that the party should raise the issue of restoration of statehood in Jammu and Kashmir.

"By virtue of being the single largest party in Parliament, and also having the leader of opposition in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, the fact that they have a pan-India footprint, which no other party can lay claim to, they are natural sort of leaders of an opposition movement," Abdullah told.—*PTI*

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah during an interview PHOTO: PTI

ED ACCUSES TN'S SENTHIL OF DELAYING TRIAL

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has informed the Supreme Court that Tamil Nadu minister V Senthil Balaji is deliberately obstructing proceedings in a money laundering case linked to a cash-for-job scam.

The ED filed an affidavit following a petition from a victim, seeking the cancellation of Balaji's bail, which was granted by the Supreme Court on 26 September after over 15 months in custody.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta argued before the bench, led by Justice Oka, that Balaji has been sabotaging the trial process, necessitating the agency's request to file an affidavit. Supreme Court is set to hear further arguments on this on 18 December. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

ZSI scientists discover 5 new wasp species

KOLKATA, 14 DEC

Scientists of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) have discovered five different species of parasitic wasp, an official said. ZSI scientists have identified Ceraphron initium, a new species of parasitic wasp from Nagaland, the official said. Four other 'parasitoid wasp' species were found in the Western Ghats by another team of ZSI. Also known as parasitoid wasp, it is an insect which lays its eggs on or inside a harmful pest insect, where the larvae destroy the host. Considered important for natural pest control these are beneficial in horticulture and helpful insects. Rigorous morphological analyses, conducted by researchers Amit Kumar Ghosh, Vikas Kumar and A Rameshkumar, confirmed the discovery of this previously unknown species, the ZSI said in the statement. *—PTI*

HP BTech student kills self after failing in exam

HAMIRPUR, 14 DEC

A 17-year-old student was found hanging at his aunt's house in Himachal Pradesh's Una town, with police suspecting that he committed suicide after failing his exams. Pankaj, a shopkeeper from Kalyana village in Hamirpur district, was found hanging with a scarf in Baihali Mohalla ward. His family had been unable to join them for dinner, and Pankaj was found hanging with the scarf. No suicide note was found, and the family members' statements were recorded. The scarf used to commit suicide has been seized, and further investigation is underway. Pankaj's father is a shopkeeper and his mother is a housewife. *—PTI*

Man killed in Bihar STF encounter, policeman injured

PATNA, 14 DEC

A man wanted in more than 10 criminal cases, including bank dacoities, in Bihar and Haryana was killed in an encounter with police in Patna district, a senior officer said on Saturday. Akash Yadav, also known as Ajay Rai, was killed in a shooting incident in Jakkanpur, Bihar, when a criminal gang spotted the police team. Rai and his associates were hiding there, and the police were retaliated against them. Rai and a sub-inspector sustained bullet injuries and were taken to the nearest government hospital. The police recovered one pistol, several cartridges, and a mobile phone from the scene. Rai was wanted in over 10 cases, including bank dacoities, in Bihar and Haryana. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Indigo flight makes emergency landing in Pak

KARACHI, 14 DEC

An IndiGo flight en route to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, was on Saturday forced to make an emergency landing at the Jinnah International Airport in Pakistan's Karachi city following a medical emergency onboard. A 55-year-old Indian man fell seriously ill while on an Indigo flight from New Delhi to Pakistan. The pilot contacted air traffic control at Karachi airport after the passenger remained unwell even after oxygen was given. The flight was allowed to land in Karachi on humanitarian grounds, where a medical team provided emergency treatment. After the issue was resolved, the flight departed Karachi and returned to New Delhi instead of continuing to Jeddah. *—PTI*

Delhi schools go hybrid as pollution curbs tighten

Resident associations asked to provide heaters to service staffs

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

The Centre's panel on Delhi-NCR air quality has issued a revised plan to tackle winter pollution, asking states to implement stricter measures when the air quality deteriorates and making it mandatory for schools to shift to hybrid learning on days with severe air pollution.

Poor air quality, driven by unfavourable weather conditions, usually persists for long periods during winter, from November to January.

During this time, Delhi frequently enforces restrictions under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), which categorises air quality into four stages: Stage I (Poor) with AQI between 201 and 300, Stage II (Very Poor) between 301 and 400, Stage III (Severe) between 401 and 450, and Stage IV (Severe Plus) for AQI above 450. Inter-state buses from NCR states, except those EVs and those running CNG or BS-VI diesel, will not be allowed to enter Delhi under Stage II. This provision earlier came into effect under Stage III.

The Delhi and NCR state governments have also been directed to stagger timings for public offices *PHOTO: ANI*

Resident welfare associations will also be required to provide electric heaters to staff involved in sanitation, gardening, and other services, in addition to security staff, to prevent open burning of biomass or solid waste during winters.

People with disabilities are exempt from restrictions imposed on BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel cars in Delhi and the districts of Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, and Gautam Budh Nagar under Stage III. The panel has also mandated that schools and colleges in Delhi, Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, and Gautam Budh Nagar shift classes up to Class V to hybrid mode (both online and offline) under Stage III. Students and parents will have the option to choose online education wherever it is available.

The Delhi and NCR state governments have also been directed to stagger timings for public offices and municipal bodies under Stage III. *—PTI*

3RD INCIDENT IN A WEEK

Six Delhi schools get bomb threat

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

At least six Delhi schools received a bomb threat on Saturday, officials said, marking the third instance of threat emails being sent to schools in the national capital this week.

"We received a call about a bomb threat at Delhi Public School, RK Puram, at 6.09 am," a Delhi Fire Services official said.

Five more schools, including Ryan International School in Vasant Kunj and Gyan Bharati School in Saket, received the same email. The email read, "Allah sees your efforts to resist his punishment. But they are futile. For no mortal being can escape the judgement of Allah. The Prophet Muhammad declares all who go against Allah enemies to the world. We see your attempt to stop us. It will not work. The Prophet Muhammad has allowed the children to burn in the sacred flame of Allah." *—PTI*

Student held for sending bomb threat to school

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

A 12-year-old student was held for sending a bomb threat e-mail to his school in south Delhi's Vasant Vihar area, police sources said on Saturday.

The school was among the 30 that received bomb threats over email on Friday, the source said, adding that the boy was traced and detained shortly afterwards. The boy told police that he sent the mail after seeing media reports about several schools in Delhi getting bomb threats. He believed that he would not get caught as none of the accused in the earlier cases had been caught yet, the source said. *—PTI*

10-yr-old cancer patient dies from rat bite in R'than hospital

The hospital however said that the boy dies due to high infection and not a rat bite *PHOTO: X*

JAIPUR, 14 DEC

A 10-year-old boy allegedly bitten by a rat on one of his toes while undergoing treatment for cancer at a government hospital here has died, an official said on Saturday.

While the State Cancer Institute, where the boy was admitted on 11 December, said the death was caused by "septicaemia shock and high infection" and not a rat bite, the Rajasthan government has constituted a committee to probe the matter.

Hospital superintendent Dr Sandeep Jasuja said, "The child also had fever and pneumonia. He died due to high infection septicaemia shock on Friday".

Medical education secretary Ambrish Kumar has sought a report from the principal of Sawai Man Singh (SMS) Medical College which is associated with the State Cancer Institute, officials said.

According to a news report published in a vernacular daily shortly after being admitted, the child started crying. When his family members removed the blanket he was lying under, they saw blood oozing from one of his toes due to a rat bite.

The family members alerted the nursing staff present there who bandaged the leg after applying first aid.

Jasuja said that they treated the child as soon as they received the information about the rat bite. He said that directives have been sent to ensure cleanliness in the hospital premises. *—PTI*

BRO steps up India-Myanmar border fencing work

IMPHAL, 14 DEC

Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has stepped up India-Myanmar border fencing work near Moreh town in Manipur's Tengnoupal district, an official said on Saturday.

India shares a 1,643 km border with Myanmar of which 398 km is in Manipur.

"BRO has commenced work of erecting the border fencing along the India-Myanmar border in general area of Moreh in Tengnoupal district," PRO Defence Kohima told PTI over the phone.

"Work has just commenced... Things are being done in a phase-wise. Only when the project reach a substantial length, we will be able to give more details on the project" the PRO said.

The work is undertaken by Project Sewak which is looking after road construction in Nagaland and Manipur. Its headquarters is based in Dimapur, the officer said.

Only 10 km of the international border with Myanmar is fenced near Moreh in Manipur.

The entire 1,643 km porous India-Myanmar border, known for the smuggling of arms, ammunition and narcotics, will be fenced at a cost of Rs 31,000 crore. *—PTI*

Actor Allu Arjun walks out of prison in stampede case

HYDERABAD, 14 DEC

Actor Allu Arjun was released from Chanchalguda prison on Saturday morning after spending a night in custody following his arrest connected to a tragic stampede that resulted in the death of a woman during the premiere of his latest film.

Despite the Telangana High Court granting him bail, Arjun was unable to leave on Friday night as authorities did not receive the bail order until late. Following his release, Arjun expressed gratitude to his fans for their support and reiterated his respect for the law. "I'm a law-abiding citizen," he stated, offering condolences to the family of the deceased.

The incident took place on 4 December at Sandhya Theatre in Hyderabad, where a 35-year-old woman lost her life and her eight-year-old son was hospitalised amid chaotic scenes as crowds gathered for a glimpse of the actor during the premiere of 'Pushpa 2: The Rule.' Police have registered a case against Arjun, his security personnel, and theatre management. Family of the deceased however said that the actor is not to be blamed and that they are ready to withdraw the case. Arjun's legal counsel, questioned the prison authorities for the delays in releasing him, describing the detention as illegal, while confirming that Arjun was classified as a "special category prisoner". *—PTI*

Telugu film actor Allu Arjun addresses a press conference at his residence, in Hyderabad on Saturday after his release from jail *PHOTO: PTI*

Police personnel during an investigation after a severed human head was recovered from a garbage dump at Tollygunge area, in Kolkata *PHOTO: PTI*

WB cops arrest brother-in-law of woman who was found beheaded

KOLKATA, 14 DEC

One person was arrested on Saturday in connection with the murder of a woman whose severed head was found in a garbage dump in south Kolkata's Tollygunge area, police said.

The arrested man was identified as Atiur Rahman Laskar, the brother-in-law of the deceased woman, they said.

Laskar had a relationship with the woman, who was separated from her husband two years ago, police said.

The woman worked as a domestic help in and around Regent Park, while the accused was a construction worker.

Police arrested Laskar from his native village, Basuldanga, in Diamond Harbour, South 24 Parganas district, and he confessed to murdering a woman during interrogation.

The severed head of the woman was found in a garbage dump, while the torso was found at Regent Park. Several body parts are still missing. *—PTI*

Kerala Minister assures strict action in paper leak row

T'PURAM, 14 DEC

Kerala Education Minister V Sivankutty on Saturday warned of stringent action against those behind the leak of question papers for SSLC and class 11 Christmas examinations.

"The Director General of Education will lodge a complaint with the DGP regarding the incident," he told reporters here.

According to recent media reports, the question papers of Class 10 English and Class 11 Mathematics for the Christmas examinations were leaked and circulated on YouTube channels before the exams.

He also said action would be initiated against YouTube channels that published the leaked question papers.

"The government will collect information about teachers from the Public Education Department who are associated with private tuition centers, and they will be subjected to an investigation," the Minister stated. *—PTI*

Sculptor's firm gets contract for new Shivaji statue in M'rashtra

MUMBAI, 14 DEC

The Maharashtra government has awarded the contract to construct a new 60-foot-tall statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at Rajkot Fort in Malvan to renowned sculptor Ram Sutar's firm.

Earlier this year, a 35-foot statue of the Maratha warrior king collapsed at the fort in Malvan taluka of Sindhudurg district on 26 August, just months after Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled it on 4 December last year.

Talking to PTI on Saturday, Anil Sutar, the son of the Padma Shri awardee sculptor, said the new statue made of bronze will be 60 feet in height and erected on a 10-foot pedestal. "Around 40 tonnes of bronze and 28 tonnes of stainless steel will be used for the statue, and it will be completed in six months," he said.

Around 40 tonnes of bronze and 28 tonnes of stainless steel will be used for the statue *PHOTO: PTI*

The collapse of a statue at Rajkot Fort sparked a political controversy, with Opposition parties accusing the Mahayuti government of insulting Shivaji. *—PTI*

IN THE WAKE OF VIOLENCE

Sambhal admin targets encroachments near Jama Masjid

SAMBHAL, 14 DEC

In the wake of recent violence that claimed four lives during a court-ordered survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid, authorities in Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh, have initiated a comprehensive campaign to address encroachments and illegal power connections around the historic mosque.

District Magistrate Rajender Pensiya confirmed that the administration is actively tackling encroachments, particularly around drainage areas, which have long been a concern. A dedicated campaign commenced on Friday in Chandausi city and will expand to other parts of Sambhal over the next two to three months.

PHOTO: ANI

"All encroachments will be cleared, and a thorough assessment will follow the cleanup around the Shahi Jama Masjid," Pensiya stated. He also mentioned efforts to revitalise a nearby well.

Additionally, a surprise inspection uncovered extensive electricity theft, with authorities identifying around 250-300 illegal connections across residential areas, mosques, and madrasas. In one alarming case, 150-200 homes were found drawing power from a single distribution unit, with an entire rooftop converted into an illegal power distribution hub. An FIR will be lodged against those found responsible.

Superintendent of Police Krishna Kumar Bishnoi noted that police are inspecting the use of loudspeakers at various religious sites as part of the operation. *—PTI*

Arunachal school water tank falls, 3 students dead

ITANAGAR, 14 DEC

Three students of a private school were killed and three others injured when an overhead water tank collapsed and fell on them in Arunachal Pradesh's Naharlagun on Saturday, police said.

The students were playing at the St Alphonsa School in Model Village when the tank collapsed injuring six students, Naharlagun Superintendent of Police Mihin Gambo said. The deceased are class 9 students while the injured belong to class 6 and 7, police said.

Police have detained the school principal, owner, and four staff members for questioning due to preliminary investigations suggesting the water tank may have exceeded its capacity. *—PTI*

MP bizman & wife's suicide note blames ED; BJP denies

BHOPAL, 14 DEC

The deaths of businessman Manoj Parmar and his wife Neha, who reportedly hanged themselves in their home in Ashta town, Madhya Pradesh, have sparked a fierce political clash between the Indian National Congress and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). A purported suicide note, which has circulated on social media, allegedly penned by Parmar, urges senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi not to abandon his children and accuses BJP leaders and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) of harassment.

The Congress party claims that Parmar and his wife were its supporters, asserting that the ED targeted them due to their political affiliations. The couple's children previously gifted Gandhi a piggy bank during his "Bharat Jodo Yatra." Congress state president Jitu Patwari condemned the deaths as potentially state-sponsored murders, suggesting the ED is being used to intimidate dissenters.

Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath echoed these sentiments, alleging that the couple's suicide was a direct consequence of harassment by the BJP and ED officials, linked to their political support.

In response, the BJP has dismissed these claims as opportunistic, with media in-charge Ashish Agrawal saying the party condemns political exploitation of personal tragedies. The ED has been investigating Parmar in connection with financial irregularities, claiming to have found incriminating evidence during recent searches. The investigation remains ongoing. *—PTI*

HAPPY FACES

People cheer outside the National Assembly in Seoul as South Korean President Yoon was impeached on Saturday over his short-lived martial law decree
PHOTO: PTI

How Gukesh became chess king in a cricket-crazy nation

By the age of 12, Gukesh had become a grandmaster – the highest title a chess player can attain – making him the third-youngest grandmaster in history and the youngest one from India ***PHOTO: PTI***

Chess prodigy Gukesh Dommaraju has become the youngest world chess champion ever after defeating defending champion Ding Liren of China.

Gukesh's win on Thursday came in the last game of the 14-game World Chess Championship in Singapore. The otherwise cricket-crazed India is jubilant at the 18-year-old's victory.

He started playing chess at the age of seven. "Chess is so complex, so I just love it," Gukesh said in the video. "I want to become a world champion."

By the age of 12, Gukesh had become a grandmaster – the highest title a chess player can attain – making him the third-youngest grandmaster in history and the youngest one from India.

Gukesh sees beauty and philosophy in pawns, bishops and boards. A YouTube video uploaded by the chess news publication ChessBase India shows the shelves of his room in his Chennai house stacked with trophies and chess books, such as Under the Surface by Jan Markos and Yochanan Afek's Practical Chess Beauty.

Chennai has come to be known as the chess capital of India. Out of the 85 chess grandmasters in India, 31 are from Tamil Nadu. The state is even home to a temple dedicated to the game

Before Gukesh, Russian legend Garry Kasparov was the youngest to become world champion at the age of 22 in 1985.

Gukesh qualified for the championship in April by winning the men's Candidates Tournament of the International Chess Federation (FIDE). He was the youngest candidate to win the Candidates Tournament.

He competed against seven other contestants in the event held in April in Toronto, Canada. The winner of the double round-robin tournament goes on to challenge the defending champion for the world title.

Ding, 32, became world champion in 2023. Starting 25 November, Gukesh and Ding faced off over 14 intense games.

In chess, a player wins one point for a win and half a point for a draw. Ding went into the lead by winning the first game. The second round ended in a tie. Gukesh won the third game, tying things up with Ding at 1.5 each. They remained tied for multiple games, drawing each of them.

In the 11th game, Gukesh, playing with white, took the lead after Ding made a blunder. But Ding bounced back by winning the 12th game, levelling the playing field once again. The 13th game resulted in a draw. Gukesh played with black in the 14th and final game. Midway through, a draw appeared imminent. But Ding made the mistake of moving his last powerful piece, his rook, off a strong position. Ding's mistake took Gukesh by surprise, and he looked intently at the board and calculated his next moves.

After realising his mistake, Ding was visibly disappointed and resigned three moves later, conceding the world champion title to Gukesh.

"It took me a while to realise I blundered. ... I think I played my best tournament in the year. "I could be better, but considering yesterday's luck, it's a fair result to lose in the end. I have no regrets," Ding said at a news conference after the game, saying he would continue to play chess.

When Gukesh realised he had won, he broke into tears. Speaking to reporters after the game, Gukesh said he initially did not realise Ding's blunder but when he did: "It was probably the best moment of my life." Prime Minister Narendra Modi posted on X: "This is the result of his unparalleled talent, hard work and unwavering determination."

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhialso posted on X: "Gukesh, you've made all of India proud!"

India's world champion Vishwananthan Anand, who has mentored Gukesh and several other young Indian chess stars said on X: "It's a proud moment for chess, a proud moment for India ... and for me, a very personal moment of pride."

From former champion Kasparov to the CEO of Google and Alphabet, Sundar Pichai, Gukesh received congratulatory messages on X from a range of public figures.

The world of cricket wasn't untouched either.

The major cricket franchise from his hometown, the Chennai Super Kings, congratulated the young champion in a post on X on Thursday:

Gukesh also got a shoutout from former Indian cricket captain Sachin Tendulkar, who is widely regarded as one of the greatest batsmen in the sport's history. He wrote on X that Gukesh is "now guiding the next wave of Indian chess prodigies". *—Al Jazeera*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Paracetamol linked to heart, kidney risks in older adults

Taking paracetamol increase the risk of chronic kidney disease by 19%, heart failure by 9% and hypertension by 7% ***PHOTO: PTI***

Paracetamol, a common over-the-counter medication, may increase the risk of gastrointestinal, heart- and kidney-related complications among adults aged 65 and above, a new study has found.

Taken commonly for treating mild-to-moderate fever, paracetamol is also the first drug recommended for treating osteoarthritis -- a chronic condition causing pain, stiffness and swelling in the joints due to wear-and-tear -- as it is considered effective, relatively safe and accessible.

However, some studies have provided evidence to contest the effectiveness of paracetamol in relieving pain while others have shown increased risks of gastrointestinal side effects, such as ulcers and bleeding, from prolonged use.

The latest study, conducted by researchers from the University of Nottingham, UK, found that paracetamol use was linked to a 24 per cent and 36 per cent increase in risk of peptic ulcer bleeding (bleeding due to ulcer in the digestive tract) and lower gastrointestinal bleeding, respectively.

Taking the drug may also increase the risk of chronic kidney disease by 19 per cent, heart failure by 9 per cent and hypertension by 7 per cent.

"This study shows a significant incidence of renal, cardiovascular and gastrointestinal side effects in older people, who are prescribed acetaminophen (paracetamol) repeatedly in the UK," the authors wrote in the study published in the journal Arthritis Care and Research.

"Due to its perceived safety, paracetamol has long been recommended as the first line drug treatment for osteoarthritis by many treatment guidelines, especially in older people who are at higher risk of drug-related complications," said lead researcher Weiya Zhang from the University of Nottingham's School of Medicine. "Whilst further research is now needed to confirm our findings, given its minimal pain-relief effect, the use of paracetamol as a first line pain killer for long-term conditions such as osteoarthritis in older people needs to be carefully considered," Zhang said. For their analysis, the researchers looked at health records of 1.80 lakh people repeatedly prescribed paracetamol (more than two prescriptions within six months).

> Researchers from the University of Bern found that paracetamol did not provide the minimum levels of effective pain relief or improve physical function in patients with knee and hip osteoarthritis

Their health outcomes were compared to those of 4.02 lakh people of the same age who were never prescribed paracetamol repeatedly. Data from the Clinical Practice Research Datalink-Gold was analysed for the study. The participants were aged 65 and over (average age 75) and had been registered with a UK general practitioner for at least a year between 1998 and 2018.

2016 study in The Lancet journal pooled and analysed data from 76 randomised trials, involving 58,451 patients, published between 1980 and 2015. Researchers from the University of Bern found that paracetamol did not provide the minimum levels of effective relief or improve physical function in patients with knee and hip osteoarthritis. *—PTI*

Paracetamol use was linked to a 24 per cent and 36 per cent increase in risk of peptic ulcer bleeding and lower gastrointestinal bleeding ***PHOTO: PTI***

Meta outage hits FB, Insta,WhatsApp: Here's what we know so far

A major outage is affecting users of popular social media and messaging services including Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp around the globe. All these platforms are run by the social media giant Meta.

As news of the outage spread, we learned that it affected almost all of Meta's products, including Messenger and Threads, as well as Meta's business products, such as Facebook Ads Manager and the Messenger API for Instagram.

Most services are beginning to come back online. But what went wrong, and what can we learn from this massive outage?

Outages have been reported from the United Kingdom to Canada to the United States and beyond.

The outage was first reported in the US on Wednesday (around 12.30pm in New York, 5.30pm in London, or 4.30am Thursday in Sydney).

Five hours later, Meta posted to X to say it was 99 per cent of the way to resolving the outage.

At the moment, there has been no official word on the cause of the outage. However, we can make some educated guesses based on its scope.

From reporting so far, the outage covered not only Meta's major social media platforms and messaging services, but also some of its business products. It also affected Meta's Login with Facebook service, which allows users to log in to third-party sites using their Facebook username and password. In other words, there seem to be very few Meta products this outage did not impact.

That suggests that whatever went wrong was a single point of failure: something relied upon by all of Meta's services, without which the services can't function.

The main way reliability is achieved is through replication. When you visit Instagram, for example, your computer connects to a server that sends back your Instagram feed. In fact, Instagram content is not stored on just one computer but is replicated across a massive array of computers known as a content delivery network (or CDN).

Practically all major web platforms and online services such as YouTube and Google, use content delivery networks to increase the reliability and efficiency of their websites.

The idea behind a content delivery network is that if one computer in the network has a problem, another can take over in its place. This is what makes the networks reliable.

Meta's outage comes in the wake of the major outage caused earlier this year by CrowdStrike's Falcon security software ***PHOTO: PIXABAY***

Content delivery networks also help when websites are under heavy demand. If many people are trying to request the same content, those requests can be spread out between many computers in the network, allowing each to be handled efficiently. The widespread nature of Meta's outage suggests it might have happened in a part of Meta's systems that wasn't replicated. However, we'll have to wait for word from Meta on the causes before we will know for sure

Meta's outage comes in the wake of the major outage caused earlier this year by CrowdStrike's Falcon security software. Falcon's design meant it was deeply entangled with Microsoft Windows. That made Falcon a single point of failure so that, when it crashed, it brought down Windows as well – in spectacular fashion.

A key lesson from this outage was that invasive security software such as Falcon should be re-engineered to operate at arm's length of Windows. This idea is known as fault isolation, which says that systems should be built as a collection of separate components so that if one component fails it cannot cause the entire system to fail.

This is the reason why modern ships are designed to have multiple internal compartments, with mechanisms to try to make each compartment watertight. That way, if the ship's hull is breached, water cannot flood the entire ship.

Meta's outage is a timely reminder of the need to engineer critical systems to maximise their reliability, including minimising central points of failure and employing engineering principles like fault isolation. In the meantime, the precise cause of outage remains to be determined.

People all over the world rely on Meta's services. These include businesses using Instagram as their primary platform for engaging customers online, or merchants using Facebook Marketplace as a key revenue stream. For many families, WhatsApp has become an indispensable way to keep in contact, especially during times of crisis.

We can only hope Meta will be forthcoming about the causes of this outage and the measures it will put in place to make sure it cannot happen again. *—The Conversation*

Iran arrests activist, his daughter for 2019 protest

DUBAI, 14 DEC

Iranian authorities have arrested leading activist Reza Khandan, the husband of the prize-winning rights lawyer and campaigner Nasrin Sotoudeh, their daughter and a lawyer said. The pro-reform Shagh Daily cited Mahmoud Behzadi Rad, an Iranian lawyer, as saying that Khandan was sentenced in 2019 over spreading "propaganda against the system" and "collusion against national security" and that authorities arrested him Friday to carry out the sentencing. Khandan was sentenced to six years in prison "for making and distributing buttons protesting Iran's compulsory hijab laws in January 2019." Khandan, also a lawyer, was summoned to prison in February 2023, but the order was not enforced at the time, the organisation said. *—PTI*

Thai Police detain 2 after bomb kills 3

BANGKOK, 14 DEC

Thai police on Saturday said two suspects were in custody as authorities investigated a bombing in the north that killed at least three people and injured dozens of others. An explosive device was thrown into a crowd during an outdoor performance at an annual festival in Umphang town in Tak province, which borders Myanmar, on Friday just before midnight, according to the Association of the Umphang Rescue Groups. Local police said at least 48 people were injured and that police have not yet pressed charges against the suspects as the investigation is ongoing. Thanathip Sawangsang, a spokesperson for the Defence Ministry, told that the forensic evidence showed that the explosive device was a homemade bomb. *—PTI*

17 PIA planes grounded due to dearth of parts

KARACHI, 14 DEC

A shortage of essential components and spare parts has grounded 17 of the Pakistan International Airlines' 34 aircraft, leaving them out of service, according to sources. "The position is that 17 aircraft of the PIA fleet remain out of service," a source in the airlines said. At present, seven out of 12 planes in the airline's Boeing 777 fleet are grounded. Additionally, seven out of 17 Airbus A320 planes are also non-operational. The airline's smaller ATR aircraft have not been spared, with only two of the five aircraft currently active. The grounded planes have been affected by a lack of engines, landing gear, Auxiliary Power Units, and other vital parts. Sources in the airlines said that shortage of funds. *—PTI*

China to invest $1B in Pak's medical city

KARACHI, 14 DEC

A Chinese business delegation has met with President Asif Ali Zardari here and expressed interest in investing USD 1 billion to establish a medical city in Pakistan, according to a media report. Pakistan has held strong bilateral relations with China which has supported it through many investments and development projects such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project which was termed as a "lifeline" for the country's economy. The delegation of Chinese investors during a meeting with Zardari on Thursday outlined their plans to invest USD 1 billion into creating the medical city in Karachi's Dhabeji Economic Zone which is outside Pakistan's biggest city and financial hub. The medical city would be Pakistan's first fully integrated pharmaceutical and medical ecosystem. *—PTI*

South Korea impeaches President over martial law

Court has 180 days to either dismiss Yoon or restore his powers

SEOUL, 14 DEC

South Korea's Parliament voted Saturday to impeach President Yoon Suk Yeol as authorities investigate allegations of rebellion over his controversial 3 December martial law decree that has caused huge political turmoil in the country.

The National Assembly passed the motion 204-85 in a floor vote. Yoon's presidential powers and duties will be suspended after the copies of a document on the impeachment are delivered to him and to the Constitutional Court.

The court has up to 180 days to determine whether to dismiss Yoon as president or restore his powers. If he's thrown out of office, a national election to choose his successor must be held within 60 days.

It was the second National Assembly vote on Yoon's impeachment motion. Last Saturday, Yoon survived an impeachment vote after most ruling party lawmakers boycotted the floor vote. Some People Power Party lawmakers had since announced their intentions to vote for Yoon's impeachment in a second vote, as public protests against Yoon intensified and his approval rating plummeted.

A caricature depicting an imprisoned President Yoon Suk Yeol is displayed in Seoul

Tens of thousands of people have braved the bitter cold and poured onto the streets of the capital, Seoul, every night for the past two weeks, calling for Yoon's ouster and arrest.

They shouted slogans, sang, danced and waved K-pop light sticks.

Smaller groups of Yoon's conservative supporters — still in the thousands — have also been rallying in Seoul, denouncing attempts to impeach the president.

- The impeachment motion alleged that Yoon "committed rebellion that hurts peace on the Republic of Korea by staging a series of riots."

Both rallies have largely been peaceful.

Yoon's martial law imposition, the first of its kind in more than four decades in South Korea, lasted only six hours, but has caused massive political tumult, halted diplomatic activities and rattled financial markets. Yoon was forced to lift his decree after parliament unanimously voted to overturn it.

After declaring martial law, Yoon sent hundreds of troops and police officers to the parliament to try to impede its vote on the decree before they withdrew after the parliament rejected it. No major violence occurred.

The impeachment motion alleged that Yoon "committed rebellion that hurts peace on the Republic of Korea by staging a series of riots." *—PTI*

SUICIDE SUSPECTED

Indian origin OpenAI whistleblower found dead in US house

NEW YORK, 14 DEC

A 26-year-old Indian-origin former employee of the artificial intelligence giant OpenAI has died by suicide in San Francisco, authorities said.

Suchir Balaji was found dead inside his Buchanan Street apartment in San Francisco on 26 November on Thanksgiving Day. Balaji was known for whistleblowing the blockbuster artificial intelligence company which is facing a swell of lawsuits over its business model.

The medical examiner's office determined the manner of death to be suicide and police officials said there is "currently, no evidence of foul play."

Balaji spoke to the Times in October, saying he was one of the researchers who worked gathering data to train OpenAI's programmes like GPT4, which users interact with through the chatbot ChatGPT.

Balaji's death comes three months after he publicly accused OpenAI of violating US copyright law while developing ChatGPT, a generative artificial intelligence programme that has become a moneymaking sensation used by hundreds of millions of people across the world, the report said.

Suchir Balaji *PHOTO: X*

Its public release in late 2022 spurred a torrent of lawsuits against OpenAI from authors, computer programmers and journalists, who say the company illegally stole their copyrighted material to train its programme and elevate its value past USD 150 billion.

In an interview with the New York Times published on 23 October, Balaji argued that OpenAI was harming businesses and entrepreneurs whose data were used to train ChatGPT.

Balaji left OpenAI because he no longer wanted to contribute to technologies that he believed would bring society more harm than benefit, the report added. Balaji grew up in Cupertino before attending UC Berkeley to study computer science. *—PTI*

Mystery drones buzz over New Jersey

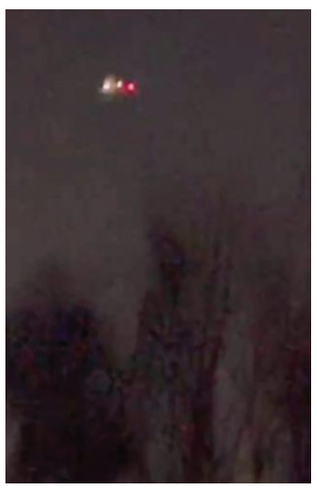
CHATHAM, 14 DEC

A series of mysterious aerial sightings over New Jersey has ignited a flurry of theories and significant public interest, leaving residents craning their necks skyward in curiosity and concern. Reports of these unidentified flying objects began emerging around Thanksgiving, culminating in increased scrutiny from lawmakers demanding answers from federal and state authorities.

Governor Phil Murphy reached out to President Joe Biden for clarification, while New Jersey's new Senator Andy Kim even undertook a drone sighting expedition in rural northern areas. The local phenomenon has since led to the creation of a Facebook group, "New Jersey Mystery Drones — let's solve it," which has attracted nearly 44,000 members, rapidly growing from 39,000.

While some speculate the drones may be linked to foreign entities, including an "Iranian mothership" or even the Secret Service surveilling President-elect Donald Trump's nearby Bedminster property, experts urge caution. William Austin, president of Warren County Community College, believes many reported "drones" are likely misidentified aircraft like planes or helicopters.

Nevertheless, anxiety persists among residents, such as Trisha Bushey, who questions official statements asserting no security threat is present, expressing that the lack of knowledge creates unease.



A drone crashed into a New Jersey homeowner's backyard after falling out of the sky on 12 December *PHOTO: X*

Mystery Drone sightings all over the Country. Can this really be happening without our government's knowledge? I don't think so. Let the public know, and now. Otherwise, shoot them down!!!

—Donald Trump, US President-elect

Critics argue that waning trust in institutions has only fueled the wild array of theories surrounding the phenomenon, adding to the growing discourse about what these mysterious objects truly are. As the sightings continue, many feel the responsibility to investigate the truth lies with the community itself. *—PTI*

Trump vows to abolish daylight saving time in US

WASHINGTON, 14 DEC

President-elect Donald Trump has pledged that his Republican Party will "use its best efforts" to abolish daylight saving time (DST) in the United States, citing it as an inconvenient and costly practice.

In the US, daylight saving time begins on the second Sunday in March and concludes on the first Sunday in November, with the clock changes occurring at 2.00am local time. In a post on his social media platform, Truth Social, Trump remarked, "The Republican Party will use its best efforts to eliminate Daylight Saving Time, which has a small but strong constituency, but shouldn't! Daylight Saving Time is inconvenient and very costly to our Nation."

With the Republican Party set to take control of both Chambers of Congress in January, Trump will be inaugurated as the 47th President of the US on 20 January.

Senator Marco Rubio, whom Trump has nominated as Secretary of State, has been a prominent advocate for the abolition of daylight saving time.

He introduced the Sunshine Protection Act to end the practice, stating, "We're 'springing forward' but should have never 'fallen back'." *—PTI*

Apple CEO Tim Cook met Donald Trump on Friday night at the US president-elect's Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

Time magazine fact-checks Trump as 'person of the year'

NEW YORK, 14 DEC

Time magazine has made history by releasing a detailed fact-check of statements made by Donald Trump during his interview, coinciding with his selection as Person of the Year for the second time. The fact-check scrutinises 15 claims, addressing topics such as border security, autism, and crowd sizes at his rallies. Notably, Time highlighted that Trump's asserted "massive" electoral mandate was less substantial than Barack Obama's in his two elections. The magazine also noted Trump's inconsistent approach to interviews, prioritising podcasts over mainstream media. This marks the first instance of a Person of the Year being accompanied by such a thorough verification process, though past interviews with various politicians have faced similar scrutiny.

Pelosi in hospital after fall in Luxembourg

WASHINGTON, 13 DEC

Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has been hospitalised after she "sustained an injury" during an official engagement in Luxembourg, according to a spokesman.

Pelosi, 84, was in Europe with a bipartisan congressional delegation to mark the 80th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge in World War II. Her spokesman, Ian Krager, said in a statement that she is "currently receiving excellent treatment from doctors and medical professionals" and is unable to attend the remainder of events on her trip. He did not describe the nature of her injury or give any additional details, but a person familiar with the incident said that Pelosi tripped and fell while at an event with the other members of Congress. The person requested anonymity to discuss the fall because they were not authorised to speak about it publicly. *—PTI*

BYE BYE TIKTOK

Remove TikTok from app stores: US to Google, Apple

WASHINGTON, 14 DEC

Influential US lawmakers, including Indian-American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, have called on Google and Apple to eliminate TikTok from their app stores in anticipation of a possible ban on the popular video-sharing platform next month.

A bill enacted by President Joe Biden in April mandates that ByteDance, the China-based parent company of TikTok, divest its ownership by 19 January, or face restrictions in the US market. As the deadline approaches, House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party chair John Moolenaar and ranking member Krishnamoorthi reached out to Apple CEO Tim Cook, Google CEO Sundar Pichai, and TikTok CEO Shou Chew on Friday.

The lawmakers requested that Cook and Pichai prepare for the removal of TikTok from their app stores by the impending deadline. In their correspondence with Chew, they urged for the "immediate execution of a qualified divestiture."

PHOTO: X

These letters followed a unanimous ruling from the DC Circuit Court, which upheld the Protecting Americans From Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act. In their letters to the tech giants, the lawmakers stated, "Today, we sent a letter to TikTok highlighting that Congress has provided ample time—233 days and counting—for the company to take necessary steps to comply with the law and pursue a divestment that protects US national security."

They added that without a qualified divestiture, the legislation renders it unlawful for Apple and Google to provide services for the distribution, maintenance, or updates of any applications controlled by foreign adversaries. "Under US law, Apple and Google must take the necessary steps to ensure compliance with this requirement by 19 January 2025," the lawmakers concluded. Meanwhile, a federal appeals court has maintained a mid-January deadline for TikTok to be sold or face a US ban, rejecting the company's request to pause enforcement pending a Supreme Court review. Concerns centre on national security and alleged risks posed by its Chinese parent company, ByteDance. *—PTI*

TURKEY TO REOPEN EMBASSY IN SYRIA AFTER 12 YEARS

ANKARA, 14 DEC

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan says that Turkey's Embassy in Syria's capital of Damascus will reopen on Saturday, for the first time since 2012.

In an interview with Turkey's NTV television Fidan said a newly appointed interim charge d'affaires had left for Damascus on Friday together with his delegation.

"It will be operational as of tomorrow," he said.

The Embassy in Damascus had suspended operations in 2012 due to the escalating security conditions during the Syrian civil war. All embassy staff and their families were recalled to Turkey.

Earlier on Friday, thousands of Syrians gathered in Damascus' historic main mosque for the first Muslim Friday prayers since the ouster of President Bashar Assad, while giant crowds celebrated in the capital's largest square and across the country.

The gatherings were a major symbolic moment for the dramatic change of power in Syria, nearly a week after insurgents swept into Damascus *—PTI*

Kavelashvili is Georgia's Prez in blow to EU bid

TBILISI, 14 DEC

Former soccer player Mikheil Kavelashvili became President of Georgia on Saturday, as the ruling party tightened its grip in what the Opposition calls a blow to the country's EU aspirations and a victory for former imperial ruler Russia.

Kavelashvili, 53, easily won the vote given the Georgian Dream party's control of a 300-seat electoral college that replaced direct presidential elections in 2017.

Georgian Dream retained control of Parliament in the South Caucasus nation in an October 26 election that the opposition alleges was rigged with Moscow's help. Georgia's outgoing president and main pro-Western parties have since boycotted parliamentary sessions and demanded a rerun of the ballot.

Georgian Dream has vowed to continue pushing toward EU accession but also wants to "reset" ties with Russia.

In 2008, Russia fought a brief war with Georgia, which led to Moscow's recognition of two breakaway regions as independent, and an increase in the Russian military presence in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Mikheil Kavelashvili *PHOTO: X*

- Georgian Dream retained control of Parliament in the South Caucasus nation in an October 26 election that the opposition alleges was rigged with Moscow's help.

Critics have accused Georgian Dream — established by Bidzina Ivanishvili, a shadowy billionaire who made his fortune in Russia — of becoming increasingly authoritarian and tilted toward Moscow, accusations the ruling party has denied. The party recently pushed through laws similar to those used by the Kremlin to crack down on freedom of speech and LGBTQ+ rights. *—PTI*

India's space economy to triple in 10yrs: Jitendra

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Indian space economy,which currently contributes eight to nine per cent of the world space economy, will increase threefold in next 10 years according to Union Minister Jitendra Singh. Speaking at India Economic Conclave organised by Times Network in New Delhi, Singh said, India is on the path of raising its space sector to global standards. He informed that India has made a quantum jump since 2014 in the Space economy. Singh said as quoted by Ministry of Science and Technology, that India will have it's own space station by 2035. *—PTI*

PHOTO:ANI

WGC predicts steady growth for gold in 2025

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

The outlook for gold presents a mix of challenges and opportunities, with the precious metal poised for modest growth amid a dynamic global economic landscape in 2025, according to World Gold Council. Market projections suggest gold may experience steady, albeit modest, growth in 2025. Key economic variables like global GDP, bond yields, and inflation indicate a stable environment, though risks remain. Several factors, including central bank actions, geopolitical tensions, and evolving consumer and investor demand, will shape gold's performance. Potential upside could emerge from stronger-than-expected central bank purchases or economic shocks prompting a flight to safe assets. *—ANI*

Indian auto industry sees 11.3% growth in H1 FY25

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

The Indian auto components industry has experienced robust growth in the first half of FY25, with a notable 11.3 per cent increase in its market size, according to Automotive Component Manufacturers Association (ACMA) report. The industry, which was valued at USD 36.1 billion in H1 FY24, surged to USD 39.6 billion in H1 FY25. Several trends have emerged in the market, with consumers shifting towards larger and more powerful vehicles across all segments. The demand for Utility Vehicles (UVs) in the Passenger Vehicle (PV) segment grew by 13 per cent, with UV1 models (ranging from 4000 to 4400 mm in length and priced under Rs 20 lakh) seeing a 25 per cent increase in sales. *—PTI*

48 crore Indians covered under PMSBY: Ministry

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Nearly 48 crore individuals have enrolled in Rs 2 lakh accident insurance coverage through the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), the Finance Ministry said on Saturday. Finance Ministry in a social media post on X added that the cumulative enrolment under the PMSBY has been 47.59 crore, and the cumulative number of claims received stood at 1,93,964, while the cumulative number of claims disbursed is 1,47,641. PMSBY is a one-year accidental insurance scheme renewable from year to year, offering coverage for death or disability due to an accident. Persons in the age group of 18-70 years having an individual bank or a post office account are entitled to enrol under the scheme. Accidental death cum disability cover of Rs 2 lakh (Rs 1 lakh in case of partial disability) for death or disability due to an accident against a premium of Rs 20 per annum. Total deposit balances under PMJDY accounts stand at Rs 2,31,236 crore. *—PTI*

Fruit, veggie supply per capita up by 7-12 kg in last decade

Agri supply inefficiencies affect nationwide food consumption

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Per capita availability of fruits and vegetables has increased by 7 kg and 12 kg, respectively, over the past ten years, according to State Bank of India (SBI) report.

However, it highlights several challenges in the agricultural supply chain that continue to impact food consumption across the country.

Notably, states like Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Jammu & Kashmir have seen growth in both fruit and vegetable production. However, many northeastern states have reported a decline in per capita production.

India produces around 227 kg of fruits and vegetables per person per year, which exceeds the general recommendation of 146 kg per person annually.

Despite this, a significant portion-30-35 per cent-of fruits and vegetables perish due to their perishable nature, as well as inefficiencies in harvesting, storage, transport, and packaging. This loss affects the overall consumption of these products.

According to the report, India produces around 227 kg of fruits and vegetables per person per year PHOTO: PTI

The report also highlights the negative impact of extreme weather conditions--such as heat and cold waves-on agricultural production in recent years.

According to the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), a 1 degree Celsius increase in temperature beyond 30 degree Celsius during the grain-filling period can reduce wheat yields by 3-4 per cent.

Middle- and high-income states have experienced a faster decline in food inflation over the last decade, compared to low-income states.

The report also suggests that the increase in wages for non-agriculture labourers has minimal impact on food inflation. The average daily wage rate for non-agricultural labourers and rural inflation has shown little correlation, indicating that wage increases do not contribute significantly to rising food prices. *—ANI*

INDIA'S CPI INFLATION TO EASE TO 4.7-4.8%

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

India's headline Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation is projected to settle around 4.7-4.8 per cent for FY25, driven by a favorable statistical base, easing food inflation, and stable global commodity prices, according to Bank of Baroda (BoB) report.

The report highlights that November 2024 CPI inflation moderated to 5.5 per cent, down from 6.2 per cent in October 2024, aided by broad-based declines in food prices.

Notably, vegetable inflation dropped sharply to 29.3 per cent in November, compared to 42.2 per cent in October. Key staples like pulses, fruits, and cereals also saw price relief, attributed to a good Kharif harvest and seasonal factors.

Core inflation (excluding food, fuel) held steady at 3.7 per cent in November. *—PTI*

RS 1.6 LAKH TO RS 2 LAKH

RBI increases collateral-free agri loan limit

This move will be effective from 1 January 2025 PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has enhanced the collateral-free loan limit for farmers from Rs 1.6 lakh to Rs 2 lakh, effective 1 January, 2025, a move aimed at supporting small and marginal farmers amid rising input costs.

The new directive instructs banks nationwide to waive collateral and margin requirements for agricultural and allied activity loans up to Rs 2 lakh per borrower.

According to the agriculture ministry, the decision comes in response to the rising input costs and the need to improve credit accessibility for farmers. "This measure will significantly benefit over 86 per cent of farmers who are small and marginal landholders," the statement said.

The move is expected to facilitate easier access to Kisan Credit Card (KCC) loans and complement the government's Modified Interest Subvention Scheme, which offers loans up to Rs 3 lakh at a 4 per cent effective interest rate.

The initiative is seen as a strategic step to enhance financial inclusion in the agricultural sector, providing farmers with much-needed financial flexibility to invest in agricultural operations and improve their livelihoods. *—PTI*

Scindia: Indian postal services to go digital

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia announced on Saturday that the Department of Posts is undergoing a comprehensive business process restructuring to transition towards a digital platform. Speaking at the 50th Foundation Day of the Indian Post & Telecommunication Accounts and Finance Service, Scindia emphasised that "Dak Sewa is Jan Sewa" – postal service is public service.

The minister highlighted the significance of this shift in the context of the burgeoning e-commerce sector, positioning the department as a leader in this evolving market. "Our department is going digital and transforming into a logistics corporation, set to lead globally," he stated.

Scindia noted that the

PHOTO:PTI

The digital transformation aligns with India's goals of bridging the digital divide and improving information access for all citizens. Scindia mentioned that telecommunications in India have seen remarkable advancements over the past 50 years.

He affirmed that, in the past decade, internet subscriptions have surged from 250 million to 954 million, while broadband subscriptions rose dramatically from 60 million to 924 million. "India will not only catch up with the world in 4G and 5G but will lead in 6G," he concluded. *—PTI*

UPI records ₹15,547 crore transactions from Jan to Nov

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has recorded a staggering 15,547 crore transactions worth Rs 223 lakh crore from January to November this year, according to the Finance Ministry. This remarkable achievement highlights UPI's transformative impact on financial transactions within the country.

In a recent social media post, the ministry emphasised UPI's growing prominence not only in India but also in several countries globally, including the UAE, Singapore, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, France, and Mauritius. Launched in 2016 by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), UPI has revolutionised the payment ecosystem by enabling instant money transfers through a single mobile application, enhancing the ease and security of transactions.

This remarkable achievement highlights UPI's transformative impact on financial transactions within the country PHOTO: X

The month of October 2024 marked a historic milestone for UPI, processing 16.58 billion financial transactions and transacting Rs 23.49 lakh crore, reflecting a 45 per cent year-on-year growth. With 632 banks now linked to its platform, UPI continues to dominate India's payment landscape, greatly benefiting small businesses and migrant workers. *—ANI*

INDIA'S EXPORTS TO US HIT $77.5B IN FY24

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

India's exports to the United States have shown a consistent upward trend, valued at USD 77.5 billion in FY24, marking a growth rate of 10.3 per cent compounded annually (CAGR) over the last 30 years, according to a report by Bank of Baroda.

The report highlights that India's exports to the United States have followed a similar trajectory to export growth since 1991, when India began economic reforms.

As of FY24, the US accounts for 18 per cent of India's total exports, a rise from 16.4 per cent in FY92 but still below the peak of 22.8 per cent in FY00 (financial year 2000).

The share of US in India's exports fell to a low of 10.1 per cent in FY11 post the financial crisis. *—ANI*

HOW SALE OF 'HOT ONES' HELPED BUZZFEED

The sale of 'Hot Ones' provided a significant financial boost to BuzzFeed, helping the company streamline its operations and focus on profitability.

PHOTO: X@DIGITALGAL_

Host Sean Evans with British Chef Gordon Ramsay

- The deal highlights the success of "Hot Ones," a popular show where celebrities eat spicy wings while being interviewed.
- Hot Ones has produced 350 episodes and First We Feast (co-producer of 'Hot Ones') has over 14M subscribers with 4B views.
- Host Sean Evans will remain with the series and is part of the investors group.
- BuzzFeed sold its 'Hot Ones' studio for $825 million.
- Deal aligns with BuzzFeed's focus on profitability and operational efficiency.

OTHER INVESTORS

An affiliate of Soros Fund Management. | Podcast producer Crooked Media. | Rhett & Link's Mythical Entertainment.

By offloading the popular property, BuzzFeed gains resources to address financial challenges and explore new growth opportunities while reducing operational burdens. This move reflects a strategic pivot towards leveraging its most valuable assets for long-term sustainability.

ED seizes ₹4,025 cr assets in Bhushan steel fraud

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

ED has restituted assets worth Rs 4,025 crore of the erstwhile Bhushan Steel and Power Limited to JSW Steel following approval from the Supreme Court, the federal probe agency said on Saturday.

JSW Steel was the successful resolution applicant to the assets of the insolvent company under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) of the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP).

These assets were earlier attached by the federal probe agency under provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in an investigation against Bhushan Steel and Power and its promoters on charges of alleged bank loan fraud and "diversion" of those funds for personal investments.

The Enforcement Directorate

PHOTO:X

(ED) said the restitution of assets worth Rs 4,025 crore was made under Section 8(8) of the PMLA (restitution pending trial), with Rule 3A of PMLA Restoration of Property Rules.

The apex court gave its approval on this ED proposal on Wednesday.

The money-laundering case against Bhushan Steel and Power stems from a chargesheet filed against the company. *—PTI*

1ST SENIOR LEVEL HIRE

Ambani appoints Ira Bindra as new Group President at RIL

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Mukesh Ambani, Asia's wealthiest individual, has appointed Ira Bindra as the new Group President overseeing people, leadership, and talent at Reliance Industries Ltd.

This strategic move aims to enhance the conglomerate's people policies across its diverse operations, which span from oil to telecommunications.

Notably, Bindra is the first senior-level hire announced directly by Ambani, highlighting the significance of her role.

Previously with Medtronic in the USA, where she served as the Head of Human

PHOTO: X

Resources and Vice President for Global Regions, Bindra is poised to spearhead unprecedented HR transformation at Reliance. Ambani remarked in an internal announcement, "Ira will collaborate with me, Isha, Akash, Anant, and the entire Executive Committee to drive cultural and leadership transformation across our company."

At 47, Bindra becomes the youngest and first non-family woman to join Reliance's powerful Executive Committee. Her diverse background includes extensive experience with global companies such as GE and deep expertise in med tech, financial services, and industrial sectors.

Bindra holds a degree from Delhi's Lady Shri Ram College and earned her MBA from Maastricht School of Management in the Netherlands. Throughout her career, she has successfully led significant business transformations in various geographies, enhancing performance outcomes. *—PTI*

E-com to adopt Safety Pledge for consumers on 24 December

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Major e-commerce platforms such as Zomato, Ajio and Ola will adopt a Safety Pledge on National Consumer Day on 24 December as part of steps to enhance product safety for online shoppers.

The voluntary commitment, announced by the Department of Consumer Affairs, aims to detect and prevent the sale of unsafe and spurious products on digital marketplaces, an official statement said.

A committee chaired by consumer activist Pushpa Girimaji developed the pledge after extensive stakeholder consultations in November 2023.

With India projected to have 500 million online shoppers by 2030 and currently hosting 880 million internet users, the initiative addresses critical challenges in the rapidly expanding e-commerce landscape. The pledge requires platforms to cooperate with statutory authorities and raise product safety awareness among sellers.

India is set to have 500 million online shoppers by 2030 PHOTO: PIXABAY

"The unique nature of e-commerce, where physical product examination is impossible, makes this safety initiative crucial," the department said.

The move aligns with the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, which mandates protection against hazardous products and unfair trade practices.

Online platforms such as Ajio, JioMart, Netmed, BigBasket, Tata Cliq, Tata 1mg, Zomato, and Ola have signed the pledge. *—PTI*

BGT: Rain halts play, Aus ends day at 28/0

On day 1 of 3rd Test, Usman & Mc Sweeney displayed defensive technique against Bumrah

BRISBANE, 14 DEC

Local hero Usman Khawaja and young Nathan McSweeney displayed sound defensive technique against Jasprit Bumrah but persistent rain played havoc with the opening day of the third Test, allowing only 13.2 overs of play in which Australia scored 28 for no loss against India, here Saturday.

The gloomy weather didn't allow any action after the rain-curtailed first session. The weather in Brisbane indicates a start-stop game throughout the next four days.

Khawaja (19 batting, 47 balls) and McSweeney (4 batting, 33 balls) traded aggression with caution but the senior left-hander still got a couple of boundaries when Mohammed Siraj pitched it short.

While India skipper Rohit Sharma would be happy that Australia didn't score way too many runs, his bowlers did not force the opposition openers to play more deliveries. A lot of deliveries were left from length.

Just when it seemed that Indian attack was getting into its groove, heavens opened up, putting brakes on the bowling momentum.

Bumrah (0/8 in 6 overs) bowled his least potent opening spell of the series so far.

Despite overcast conditions and enough bounce on offer, he didn't bowl too many wicket-taking deliveries in that six-over first spell while Siraj (0/13 in 4 overs) was guilty of occasionally pitching it short.

With not many probing questions asked, the first 25 minutes before the steady drizzle stopped proceedings saw Australia reach 19 for no loss.

Before the first break, even Bumrah pitched more deliveries back of length, allowing the batters to leave them easily, trusting the bounce of the surface.

The second rain break came just when Akash an, Siraj had started pitching the ball further up, using the angles well. —*PTI*

Virat Kohli during day 1 of 3rd Test between India & Australia at the Gabba in Australia, on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

Adams' long range stunner seals Torino win

EMPOLI, 14 DEC

Scotland international Che Adams scored from almost the halfway line as Torino ended a run of poor form to win at Empoli 1-0 in Serie A. Adams replaced Antonio Sanabria in the 64th minute and made his mark almost immediately. With 70 gone, he spotted the Empoli goalkeeper off his line and lobbed the ball over his head from inside the center circle. The goal ended his personal eight-game drought in spectacular fashion, and will ease pressure on coach Paolo Vanoli. The Turin club was unbeaten in its first five league games and topped the table for a time. But it has won only one of 10 games since, back in late October. Friday's win lifted Torino in 12th place, 2 places behind Empoli. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Toulouse comes from behind to beat Saint-Etienne

TOULOUSE, 14 DEC

Toulouse came from behind at home to beat Saint-Etienne 2-1 in a scrappy match that left the visitor stuck in the Ligue 1 relegation zone. Saint-Etienne has struggled in its first season back in the top tier but it took the lead with a nicely worked opener. Dennis Appiah's inviting cross after 53 minutes gave Lucas Stassin his first goal for the club. However, Saint-Etienne's lead lasted only a minute. Almost straight from the kickoff, Toulouse pushed forward and Shavy Babicka stooped to head home a cross from the left. Toulouse rose two places into eighth, while Saint-Etienne stayed third from the bottom. —*PTI*

Mandaviya to launch 'Fit India Cycling' on 17 Dec

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya will officially launch the 'Fit India Cycling Tuesdays' initiative on 17 December at the Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium. The initiative will occur at over 100 venues across India, with simultaneous events at Sports Authority of India regional centres. Starting on 17 December, the cycling events will be held every Tuesday, aiming to encourage nationwide participation. Veteran Bollywood actor Anil Kapoor endorsed the initiative on social media, encouraging everyone to join, stating, "Get fit, go green! Join Fit India Cycling Tuesdays and be part of a movement that's good for you and the planet." In response, Mandaviya praised Kapoor's support and urged citizens to ride for both fitness and environmental well-being. CWG gold medallist boxer Nitu Ghanghas and Fit India champions like Manas Saha and Anshu Taravath have also expressed their support, highlighting the initiative's potential to combat pollution. —*PTI*

Southee matches Gayle, nears 100 sixes milestone

HAMILTON, 14 DEC

New Zealand right-hand batter Tim Southee levelled the record of slamming most sixes in the longest format of the game with West Indies legendary batter Chris Gayle (98 sixes) and is just two sixes away from completing the 100 digit mark. Southee is currently participating in the third and final Test match of the series against England which is the farewell match of his international cricketing career. While batting on Day 1 of the Test match, the 36-year-old played a quick-fire knock of 23 runs from just 10 balls which was laced with three maximums and one boundary in his innings. With these three sixes, the Kiwi cricketer equalled the record for most sixes in Test cricket with Chris Gayle which is 98. —*ANI*

1st T20I: Under-fire India face gritty West Indies

NAVI MUMBAI, 14 DEC

Her poor leadership under constant scanner, a beleaguered Indian captain Harmanpreet Kaur will need to quickly pick up pieces from the Australia series debacle as hosts take on West Indies in the opening game of the three-match WT20I series starting here on Sunday.

India have won each of their last eight T20Is against the West Indies in the shortest format since November 2019.

But to maintain this dominating run, India will have to dig deep from rapidly depleting reservoirs of both resources and confidence to keep the ship afloat.

It has not been a smooth ride for the Indian skipper whose questionable selection calls during the Australia ODI series left everyone wondering as to how long the national selectors will persist with her despite Smriti Mandhana well and truly ready to take over the mantle.

This is India's first T20 series after the inglorious T20 World Cup exit where the only consolation was a hard-earned win against Pakistan.

India after that won an ODI series against New Zealand at home and were blanked by Australia. —*PTI*

TEAMS

INDIA: Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Smriti Mandhana, Nandini Kashyap, Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh (wk), Uma Chetry (wk), Deepti Sharma, Sajeevan Sajana, Raghvi Bist, Renuka Thakur, Priya Mishra, Titas Sadhu, Saima Thakor, Minnu Mani, Radha Yadav.

WEST INDIES: Hayley Matthews (c), Shemaine Campbelle (vc), Aaliyah Alleyne, Shamilia Connell, Nerissa Crafton, Deandra Dottin, Afy Fletcher, Shabika Gajnabi, Chinelle Henry, Zaida James, Qiana Joseph, Mandy Mangru, Ashmini Munisar, Karishma Ramharack, Rashada Williams.

The New Zealand tail added 76 runs in the last eight overs of the day **PHOTO: PTI**

3rd Test Day 1: NZ stumbles to 315/9 against England

HAMILTON, 14 DEC

New Zealand steadily squandered a good start, slumping from 172-2 to 231-7 before rallying to 315-9 at stumps Saturday on the first day of the third test against England.

Mitchell Santner hit the last ball of the day for six to reach his fourth test half century and was 50 not out while Will O'Rourke had yet to score. The New Zealand tail added 76 runs in the last eight overs of the day to bring some balance back into the game after the failure of the middle order.

After a 105-run opening partnership between Tom Latham and Will Young, New Zealand enjoyed the rare experience of holding the upper hand over England in a series which so far has been one-sided in favor of the tourists.

England holds an unassailable 2-0 lead, winning the first test in four days by eight wickets and the second in three days by 323 runs. In those seven days, New Zealand only occasionally had a dominant session.

But England won the toss and chose to bowl and by lunch New Zealand was 93-0. —*PTI*

Hendricks' ton seals T20 series for SA against Pak

CENTURION, 14 DEC

South Africa won a bilateral Twenty20 series for the first time in more than two years when it chased down Pakistan's 206.

Opener Reeza Hendricks' maiden T20 century, 117 off 63 balls, drove the Proteas to 210-3 with three balls to spare.

Pakistan's 206-5 was braced by an equally brilliant unbeaten 98 off 57 by opener Saim Ayub, who was desperately unlucky not to notch his maiden T20 century. He was stranded, unable to face the last nine balls of the innings.

South Africa won the series 2-0 with a game to spare for its first T20 series victory since August 2022.

The teams' combined 416 runs were the most in the 17-year history of their T20 matchups.

The last T20 is on Saturday in Johannesburg. — *PTI*

IPL AUCTION 2024

Salary cap hinders PSL bid for IPL big names

KARACHI, 14 DEC

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and the franchise owners in the Pakistan Super League are facing a catch-22 situation over signing on some of the high profile overseas players who went unsold in the Indian Premier League auction recently.

PSL 10, to be held between 8 April to 19 May, is clashing with the IPL this time and teams are keen to sign players such as David Warner and Steve Smith, who did not find takers in IPL auction.

A team source told PTI while the six franchise owners were keen to rope in some of the high profile players available after the IPL auction, the salary ceiling of USD 200,000 for players in the PSL players draft had made the situation difficult.

Big names like David Warner, Kane Williamson, Steve Smith, Jonny Bairstow. Adil Rashid etc would be free of international commitments as the window from April to May is reserved for the IPL.

He explained that the PCB and franchise owners were aware that it was unlikely most of the high profile players unsold in the IPL would sign for under USD 200,000.

The source said some of the franchise owners were reluctant to pay players anything above the salary cap for the PSL and also fear that even if a franchise signs on a high profile player directly at a higher salary it could lead to dissatisfaction among other players specially the local ones in the league. —*PTI*

PSL 10, to be held between 8 April to 19 May **PHOTO: PTI**

Patidar: Missed it, but not over yet

BENGALURU, 14 DEC

Rajat Patidar's international career did not take off as he would have liked, but the Madhya Pradesh batter is confident of "re-creating" the opportunity through domestic matches and don the India jersey again.

Patidar's six innings against England earlier this year produced just 63 runs, but the right-hander has shown impressive touch in the first half of the Ranji Trophy and the ongoing Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy. Patidar has accepted his "failure" and has moved away from disappointment.

In that context, the 31-year-old has taken a bold first step, scoring a good runs. —*PTI*

Guardiola calls for bigger squad amid fixture congestion

MANCHESTER, 14 DEC

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has voiced concerns over the need for a larger squad to manage the increasing demands of football's fixture calendar. With the added pressures of competing in three competitions, including an expanded Champions League, City has faced a string of injuries that have impacted their performance. They will also participate in the Club World Cup in the United States at the end of the season.

Reflecting on the current situation, Guardiola stated, "With this calendar, you need a squad of 25, 30 players. It will be more difficult financially for the club. The problem is the schedule."

Currently, key players including Rodri, Kevin De Bruyne, John Stones, Ruben Dias, and Phil Foden have all been sidelined, contributing to a poor run of form for the four-time defending Premier League champions. City has recorded seven losses and just one win in this series. —*PTI*

Pak's Amir bids adieu to Int'l cricket

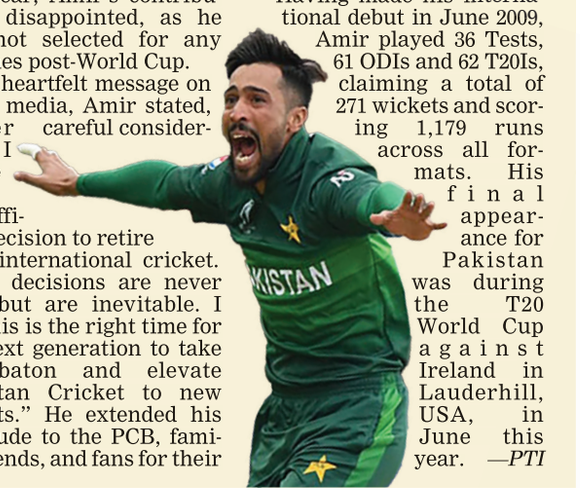
KARACHI, 14 DEC

The controversial left-arm pacer Mohammad Amir has announced his retirement from international cricket once more, just months after his return for the T20 World Cup earlier this year. Amir's decision follows his initial retirement in 2020, driven by allegations of "mental torture" from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

Amir, who faced a five-year ban and brief imprisonment for his involvement in the spot-fixing scandal of 2010, made a notable comeback to international cricket, playing a pivotal role in Pakistan's victory at the 2017 Champions Trophy against India. Despite a promising return earlier this year, Amir's contributions disappointed, as he was not selected for any matches post-World Cup.

In a heartfelt message on social media, Amir stated, "After careful consideration, I have taken the difficult decision to retire from international cricket. These decisions are never easy but are inevitable. I feel this is the right time for the next generation to take the baton and elevate Pakistan Cricket to new heights." He extended his gratitude to the PCB, family, friends, and fans for their unwavering support throughout his career.

Having made his international debut in June 2009, Amir played 36 Tests, 61 ODIs and 62 T20Is, claiming a total of 271 wickets and scoring 1,179 runs across all formats. His final appearance for Pakistan was during the T20 World Cup against Ireland in Lauderhill, USA, in June this year. —*PTI*



2034 WORLD CUP

Saudi's plan sparks environmental worries

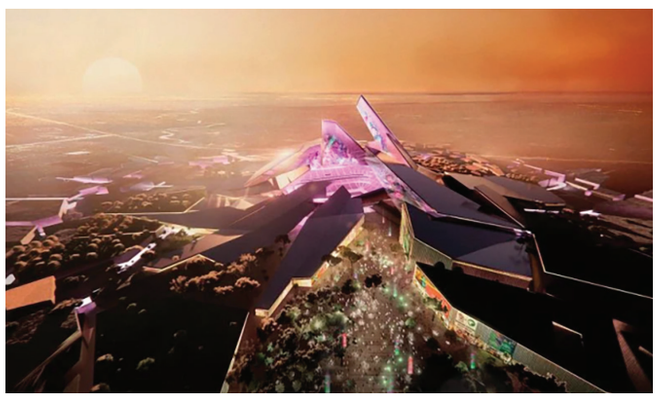
NEW YORK, 14 DEC

Following its recent selection as the host for the 2034 World Cup, Saudi Arabia has announced ambitious plans to build or renovate 15 stadiums, develop a futuristic city, and expand its airports to accommodate millions of athletes, coaches, and fans. However, experts predict that such extensive construction will result in significant greenhouse gas emissions, largely due to the carbon-intensive processes associated with concrete, steel, and heavy machinery.

Professor Andrew Zimbalist of Smith College condemned the initiative as "environmentally wasteful in the extreme," arguing that the tournament should occur in countries with a more established football culture. Seth Warren Rose, founding director of the Eneref Institute, warned that by 2034, the planet will face even more severe climate challenges, urging organisers to commit to meaningful emissions reductions or forgo hosting.

Despite referencing sustainability efforts in its bid book—such as utilising solar energy and green building standards—the scale of Saudi Arabia's plans raises doubts about their overall carbon impact. Karim Elgendy from Chatham House cautioned that the upcoming World Cup could become the most carbon-intensive ever, with the potential carbon footprint nearly double that of the 2022 tournament.

In contrast, the organisers of this summer's Paris Olympics achieved a goal of halving their carbon footprint compared to previous games through renewable energy and sustainable practices. Critics argue that FIFA should be held accountable for selecting hosts based on bid quality rather than environmental. As the kingdom prepares for this mega-event, concerns over the environmental ramifications and the treatment of migrant workers. —*PTI*



Saudi Arabia has ambitious plans to build or renovate 15 stadiums, develop a futuristic city & expand its airports **PHOTO: DEZEEN.COM**

Chopra's T-shirt inducted into WA's heritage collection

MONACO, 14 DEC

Star Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra has had his competition artefacts included in the prestigious World Athletics Heritage Collection, now showcased on the Museum of World Athletics (MOWA)'s online 3D platform.

Chopra, who made history by becoming India's first Olympic gold medallist in athletics at the Tokyo Games in 2021, has donated the competition t-shirt he wore at the Paris Games this year. He secured a silver medal with a noteworthy second round throw of 89.45m, finishing behind Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem, who set an Olympic record with an impressive 92.97m throw.

Among the 23 athletes whose items have been inducted into the heritage collection are Ukraine's Yaroslava Mahuchikh, the World Athletics women's field event athlete of the year, and fellow Paris Olympic medallist Thea LaFond.

World Athletics president Sebastian Coe praised generosity of athletes for contributing their competition gear and medals to the museum. "We are proud to announce donations from Paris 2024 medallists: Yaroslava Mahuchikh, Thea LaFond, and Neeraj Chopra. —*PTI*